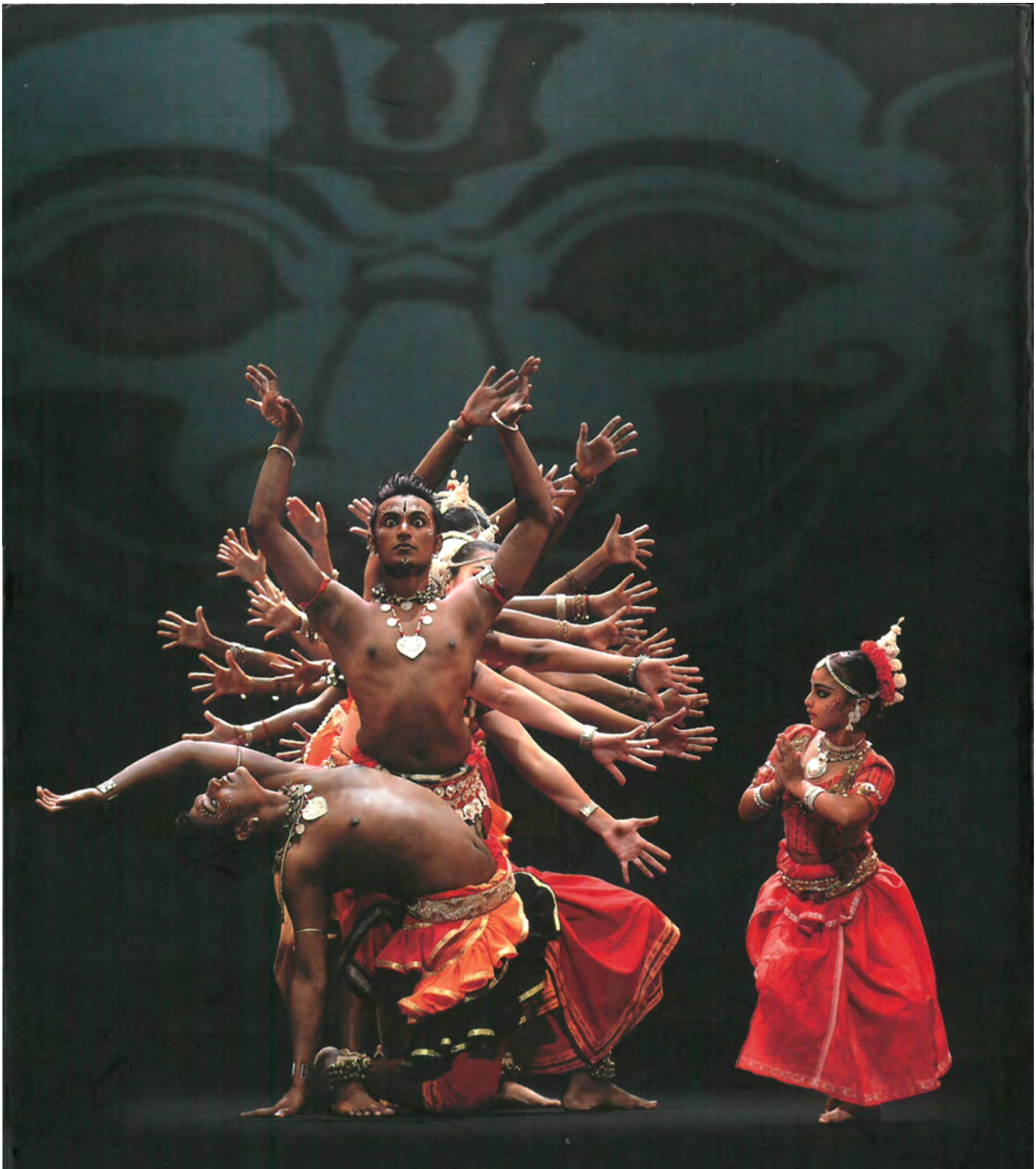


Dancing GANJAM

Ganjam, is not merely a geographical entity, it is a celebration of the spirit of poetry and an aesthetic that once defined the region's dancing movements and gestures. This admirable spirit once vitalised the sinews of a brave and seafaring people under the imperial southern Ganga dynasty. The Ganga rulers made the men of Ganjam into fighters and builders of huge temple complexes. Their subsequent masters, the British recognised their artistic flair but soon broke up their territory into tiny principalities under the suzerainty of Madras Presidency. However, these tiny principalities, became vibrant centres of a number of performing arts such as Sakhinata, Prahallada Nataka, Dandanata, Ramalila, Krishnalila, Radhapremalila and Dasakathia. Ganjam was famous for a distinguished dance structure in which the sakhipila (pre-puberty boy dancer playing the role of a girl) had a pivotal part. This structure enabled the young dancers to blossom into reputed singers, formidable percussionists and accomplished dance masters.

This once vibrant tradition now lies dormant and needs to be revitalize. GANJAM Odissi, a stunning composition performed by Sutra Dance Theatre under the artistic direction of Ramli Ibrahim, is a homage to the authors and poets from this region whose excellence in the fields of music, dance and literature gave the initial impetus to Odissi in its present form.

This book documents the emergence of GANJAM Odissi and its exciting journey through Ganjam and simultaneously argues for adding a new dimensions to Odissi.



TEAM GANJAM

Standing from Left: 1 Vickneshwaran 2 Prithylasmi 3 Abtin Javid 4 Harenthiran 5 Rama Chandra Behera (mardal) 6 Satya Brata (vocal) 7 Guru Gajendra Panda 8 Kirthana 9 Ramli Ibrahim 10 Dr Dinanath Pathy 11 Leela Venkataraman 12 Sangita Panda 13 Jabahar Mishra (flute) 14 Swapneswar Chakraborty (sitar) 15 Vanizha 16 Nithya Kuthiah 17 Sarveshwaran

Seated from Left: 1 Renuka Paniker 2 Vaishnevi 3 Mohana 4 Mathuri 5 Thrisherna 6 Revathi Karthik 7 Geethika Sree 8 Divya Nair 9 Tan Mei Mei 10 Vetheejay 11 Karishma Kaur 12 Jeysrii Kullaya 13 Vytheswari

Dancing GANJAM

Edited by

Dinanath and Soubhagya Pathy

aṅgarāg

Supplement Series 12



Panoramic view of south Odisha - nature, life and art

Niyamgiri hills, a shelter with Kondha murals signifying hill motifs, Kondha bronzes, Saura wall painting (idital), Bonda mother with her child



Semi-urbanised tribal women in a south Odishan village, A widow drawing floor designs with stone powder, Monochromatic wall paintings

Dancing GANJAM

Edited by
Dr. Dinanath and
Dr. Soubhagya Pathy
2016

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Wall paintings of Buguda and Dharakote









Anasara painting from south Odisha, Nayika pata from Chikiti gada, Wall mural, Kali of Phanibandha and Balarama, Painted wooden tablet from Digapahandi



Colonial arches of Dharakote palace, Painted wooden tablets of Radha and Krishna from Digapahandi, Carved and painted wooden ceiling from Buguda, Murals at Dharakote Jagannatha temple





















Palm-leaf paintings
of *Amarusataka* and
Rasika Haravali

Foreword

We are often told that the past is what has ceased to be. It is dead and gone and nothing can alter or modify it. There is a grim finality about it and we must learn to stoically accept it. But experience tells us that this is not the case and that the past is a construct and that the process of constructing it never comes to an end. It has a persistent presence in the present , which is constantly engaged in interrogating, appropriating, redefining and reinterpreting it.

As Gunter Grass once perceptively put it, writers can never let the past rest in peace. They revisit it all the time and suggest alternative ways of making sense of it and challenge ways in which the mighty and the privileged make it serve their narrow, selfish and authoritarian ends.

In the present volume, Dr. Dinanath Pathy and his co-editor have set themselves precisely such a complex and exciting task. They and the contributors to this volume seek to demonstrate how, in fashioning the grand narrative of the emergence of modern Odisha, vitally important elements were deliberately neglected and sometimes willfully rendered invisible. According to this narrative, which has gained wide acceptance, modern Odia identity was shaped in the crucible of coastal Odishan districts such as Cuttack, Puri and Balasore. The essays featured in this volume seek to rewrite this narrative by focusing on what was left out of it and why. Many seem to have forgotten that south Odisha had played a significant part in the drama of the emergence of modern Odisha. In fact, the defenders of the embattled Odia identity in the nineteenth century found in the poetry of Upendra Bhanja, a poet from South Odisha, evidence of the high level of excellence and sophistication attained by Odia language. The participation of Kondhas from Ghumsar in the Paik rebellion in 1817 had shaken the very foundation of British rule in Odisha. Resistance offered by tribal leaders of south Odisha to British rule shaped colonial policies in mid-19th century. However, these remain on the margins of the narrative of the rise of modern Odisha.

A similar process seems to be at work in the sphere of writing the history of the performing arts in modern Odisha. As the contributors to this volume convincingly show, the campaign to get Odissi recognized as a classical dance form systematically overlooked the deep indebtedness of Odissi to dance forms of south Odisha such as Sakhinata, Radhapremalila and Prahallada Nataka. As a result, Odissi came to be viewed as a dance form originating in traditions prevalent in coastal districts such as Cuttack and Puri. This amounts to an attempt to reconstruct a past by suppressing or erasing many key aspects of it thereby distorting and impoverishing it.

In their refusal to accept the past as final and inviolable and their determination to retrieve submerged narratives underlying official versions of the past, the editors of this volume have rendered a splendid serve to their readers.



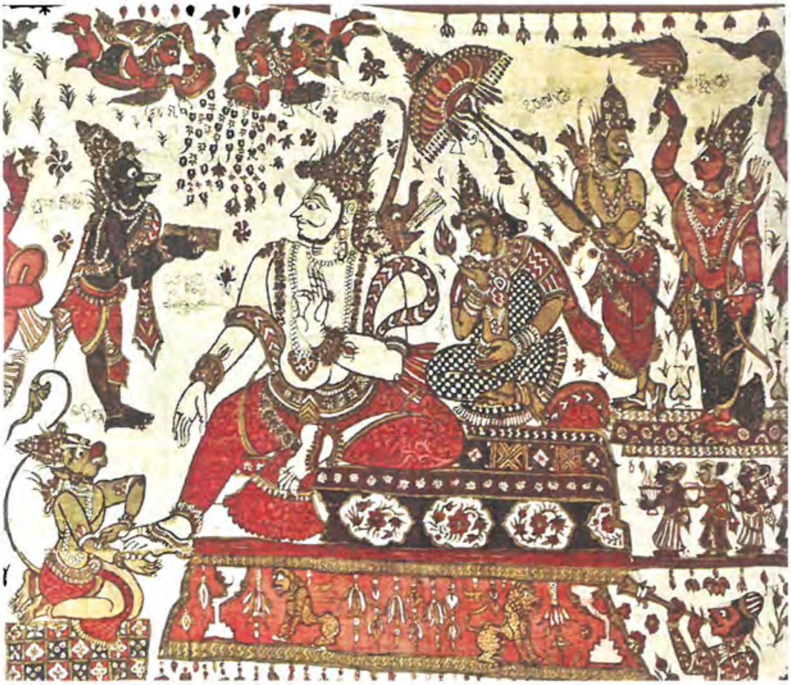
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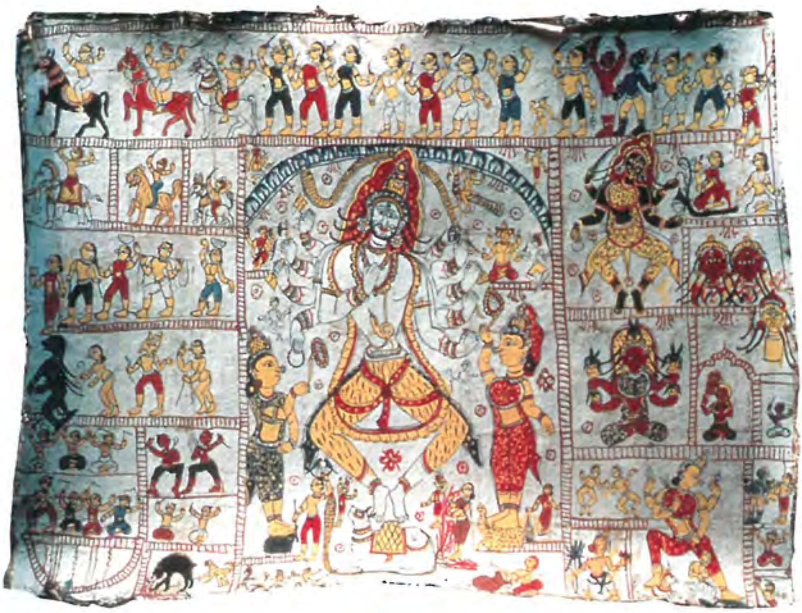






Painted wooden tablets showing coronation of Rama(Museum Rietberg, Zurich), Chikiti gada, Palm-leaf paintings depicting Ravana





Kalamkar textile with coronation of Rama(Odisha State Museum), Osakothi painting on a bamboo mat with dancing Shiva at the centre from Digapahandi

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Dinanath being congratulated by Leela Venkataraman and Indian High Commissioner T.S. Thirumurti greeting the artist

Preface
The Glory of Ganjam Glitters on Stage

Leela Venkataraman



Mangalacharana, GANJAM Odissi, 2015 (Photo: A Prataph)

Odissi dancers have revelled in performing to the poetic excellence and music traditionally contributed by litterateurs and art personalities from the district of Ganjam in south Odisha, but the adjectival reference 'Ganjam' in a mildly sarcastic tone, carries with it connotations hinting at a *dakshini* (south Indian) influence. Historically, Ganjam boasts of its own rich cultural specificity, while being very much a part of the larger identity of the State. Though parts of Ganjam were with the Madras Presidency during British rule, the region's shared border with south India, especially the Telugu-speaking region, influenced many of its performing art traditions. This whole area govern by the mighty, seafaring, Eastern Ganga dynasty, comprising great temple builders, also had marital relations with the Cholas. Veera Rajendra, the last of the great Chola line, had his daughter Rajasundari married to the Eastern Ganga prince, and the son of that union was Anantavarma Chodaganga. He played a major role in the establishment of the Lord Jagannatha Temple (the presiding deity of Odisha even today) in the ancient city of Puri.

Maheswar Mahapatra, author of the dance treatise *Abhinava Chandrika*, hailed from the Ganjam region. So did Kavisurya Baladeva Rath, the architect of the effulgent poetry and music of Champu- one of the main genres of traditional Odissi music. Also hailing from Ganjam was Gopalakrushna, the prolific writer and poet whose works delight in child Krishna's feats and his adolescent years of sporting and romancing with the gopis. Ganjam was again the home of poet Upendra Bhanja and famous artists like Saratchandra Debo, Harisharan Mahapatra, Simhadri Maharana, Harihara Panda and Lakshminarayana Achari. Among its rich performing art traditions are Prahallada Nataka (the Odia version inspired by the Telugu original), Paralakhemandi's sakhinatapila (gotipua in other areas of Odisha) and Radhapremalila all influenced by the proximity to south India and its art forms.

Capturing the earthy and refined flavours of Ganjam in a massive Odissi production carrying the same name. Malaysia's Sutra Foundation spearheaded by Ramli Ibrahim, presented one of the most challenging dance works. Its premiere in Kuala Lumpur was presented on the grand performance space of the Istana Budaya, as one of the highlights of the month-long DiverseCity 2015: KL International Arts Festival. Will India ever have such an auditorium where platforms can be manipulated to appear and disappear, to be lowered or lifted smoothly at the push of a button?

GANJAM was the end product of a search that began a year ago. Artists from Odisha representing the best in various disciplines began working together with Ramli and his team. Dinanath Pathy, the literary and visual consultant from Digapahandi taluk in Ganjam, conceived the theme, and the myriad visual images it could lend itself to. Dance composer Gajendra Panda, also from Ganjam, a *gurubhai* of Ramli and one of the seniormost disciples of the late Guru Debaprasad Das, helped cull literary sources and movement ideas from the tribal and folk culture of Ganjam, and conceived of ways to weave them into the stylised classical format of Odissi. Gopal Panda, the musician / musicologist, composed and set the music which was a deftly woven fabric combining the very old and the new in a seamless weave. Last but not the least, was the choreographic adaptation for the group format by artistic director Ramli Ibrahim. To set off the massive effort was the brilliant lighting and set design by Sivarajah Nataranjan. By no means less significant were the 23 dancers of Sutra Foundation, put through their paces and made to toil countless hours to achieve an immaculate group synchronisation, which is Ramli's forte.

It would be pertinent to recall here that Guru Debaprasad Das, Ramli's teacher, thought of classical dance as a continuum form the *deshi* form - as an evolution from Kalishi, Osakothi, Danda, finally culminating in the Mahari in the temple. Odissi was the final sophisticated reconstruction, with stylised grammar of technique, built on the remains of whatever had survived the onslaught of history , as Mahari and Gotipua dances. He often referred to the *Tri-dhara*, the triple streams of folk, tribal and classical as constituting the composite identity of dance in any region. And since he openly acknowledged the inspiration from the

regional traditions, his Odissi style has an earthy vigour different from that of the painterly vision of Kelucharan Mohapatra.

The beauty of GANJAM lay in adhering to the prescribed classical Odissi format of *Mangalacharana*, *Sthayi*, *Abhinaya*, *Pallavi* and *Moksha* - with each built round images influenced by radiations of Ganjam. The entire effort opened Odissi to hitherto unexplored territory. *Mangalacharana* in the benedictory part paid homage to Ganesa as the promoter of *tandava nritya* with the signature prayer song from Prahallada Nataka. It evoked Narasimha in two moods - of annihilating Hiranyakasipu and also as the benign Lakshmipati with the Goddess seated on his lap - both attitudes are common visuals in the murals of Ganjam's temples. The backdrop had an overblown mural of the intoxicated eyes of Narasimha staring out of his visage, as the group performed the *Mangalacharana*. The *Sthayi* visualising the chiselled forms of the *Nayika* and *Nayaka* adorning the temple walls, was built around a one-line musical refrain with *nritta* patterns in different arithmetical combinations knit into the *tala*. What was called a *paramparik raga* sounded exactly like the Carnatic Khamas, as the male and female voices of Satyabrata and Sangita Panda combined beautifully, along with fine mardala accompaniment by Rama Chandra Behera. Leading the excellent musical team with his *manjira* and recitation of *ukkutas*, was Gajendra Panda. A lot of the lyricism in the movements have been influenced by the sakhinata tradition wherein boys dressed in female attire present *sakhi bhava*. Also included was a *sabda svara pata* passage - a much loved component of Debaprasad's works - making for a punctuation point in the *nritta*, injecting it with a tautness and special bite.

Ramabhajan, in the devotional vein, was built round an ancient *raga* prevalent in the Daskathia narrative tradition of Ganjam. After referring to old texts, Gopal Panda the music composer, deciphered it as Mangala Kamodi not common in the music of Odisha today. Taken from *Nagarakirtan*, fleeting images from the *Ramayana* followed in quick flashes and an overall ambience of devotion, seemed to carry the audience with its mood. Pallavi, the *nritta* centre piece of an Odissi presentation was a climax, the *Sa regama Pallavi* - as the oldest of these compositions performed by the gotipuas is called - set in Rasamanjari *raga*, with sophisticated rhythms of Odissi blended with the earthy compulsive rhythms of the folk and tribal dances of the Kondhas, Bondas, and Parajas. The sight of 23 dancers moving in a long line, in a *chauka* posture, with arms round the waist of the next dancer, invoked one of the most compulsive tribal-like images. *Sringara* poses found in palm-leaf manuscripts of the area, and the *sabda svara* patterns knit into the choreography, with accelerating tempo, the dissolving and forming of homogenous and heterogeneous patterns by the male and female dancers, at frequent intervals made for heady excitement rhythmically and visually, Gajendra Panda's *ukkuta* recitation was also a matter of curiosity as many in the audience were watching such an ambitious Odissi recital with live music, for the first time.

The phenomenal group synchronisation had its magnum opus in the concluding Yogini-Moksha, with the backdrop sporting some of the most striking

paintings - culled by Dinanath and screened by Shivarajah. The Ganjam region, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack constitute the Shaivite belt in the largely Vaishnavite Odisha, and is also known for its Tantric faith and the innumerable manifestations of Shakti. Guru Debaprasad's repertoire abounds in items like *Dashamahavidya*, *Navadurga*, *Ashtakatayayani* and *Chausathi Yogini* - all manifestations of the feminine divinity including the benign and the ferocious forms. Set to a *ragamalika*, the dance visualised Sarasvati playing the vina and the world resonating to the rhythms of the dance of Vishnu and Shiva. The *Yoginis*, after their *lila*, are ultimately absorbed into the oneness of Shiva and what followed is the utter quietude of *Moksha*. The frenzied dancing, by the troupe including the youngest ten year old dancer also in top form, reached a crescendo before getting submerged in the all embracing peace.

GANJAM was a truly painstaking endeavour showing what best can be achieved when there is a will and the discipline to carry it out.

Reinforcing the Ganjami ambience in the foyer was an exhibition of paintings by Dinanath declaring "I am from Ganjam and so are the Images". It was inaugurated by T.S. Thirumurti, Indian High Commissioner to Malaysia. The compelling images of the bloodthirsty Narasimha, his contrasting calmed down form with Lakshmi on his lap, Kali dancing triumphantly on an inert Siva with a severed head in her hand, the excellent *Pata* painting of Balarama which seemed so south Indian with the plait, rakodi, talai-samaan and crown, an arresting canvas of the buxom Mangala (Goddess of prosperity) holding overflowing earthen pots, the image of the dancer in broad pile, with tiger stripes painted on the body and holding the mask of a tiger, were all a reaffirmation of the Ganjam identity in every way.

(Earlier published in *Sruti*, Feb. 2016)

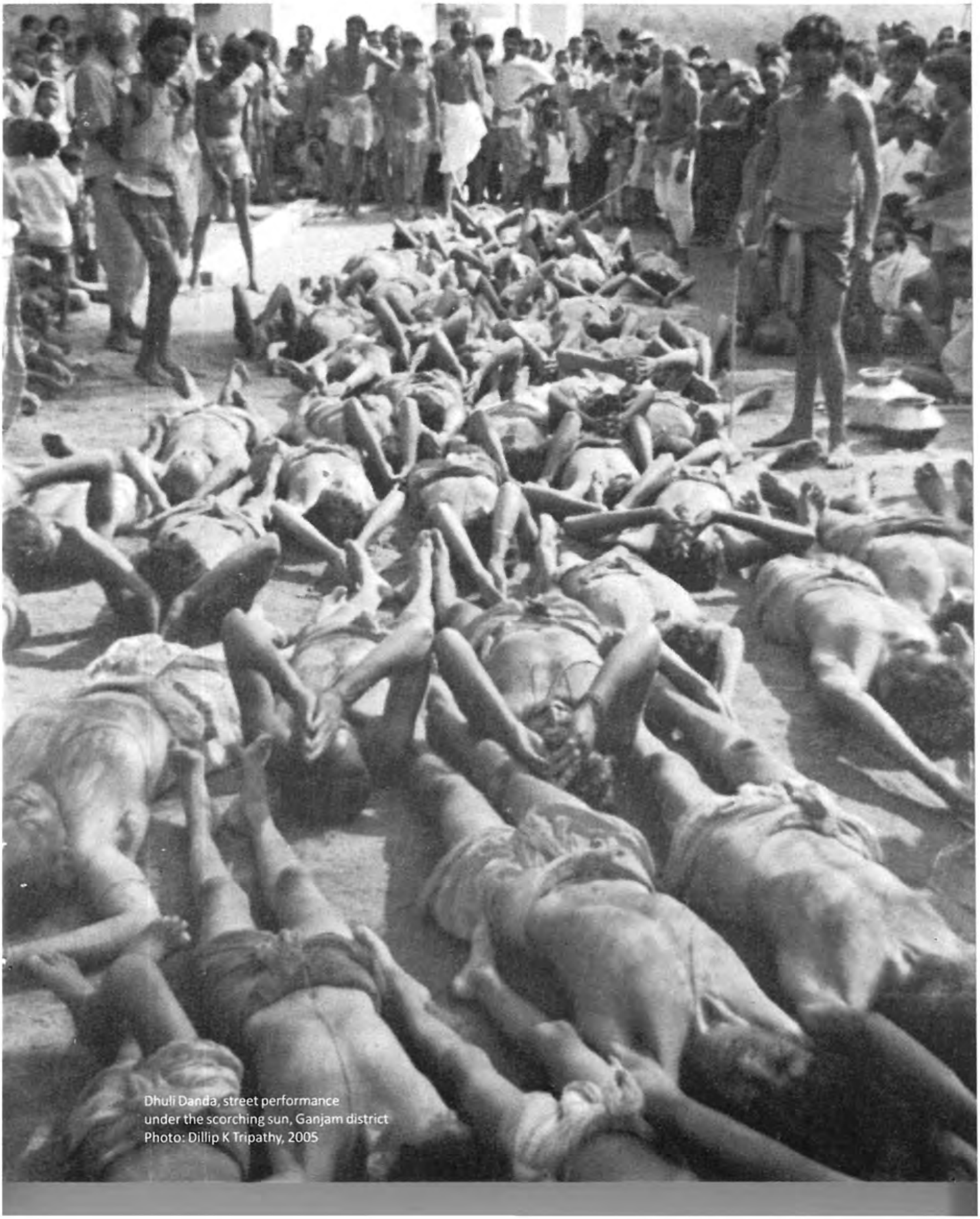


At the inauguration of the Painting Exhibition at Istana Budaya Foyer, Kuala Lumpur, 2015

Introducing

Dancing Ganjam

Dinanath Pathy



Dhuli Danda, street performance under the scorching sun, Ganjam district
Photo: Dillip K Tripathy, 2005

When one leisurely looks at a map of India and tries to figure out the places, those were once under the grip of dance revival at the advent of the 20th century, one is amazed the way, the whole of south India beyond the Vindhya ranges together rose to the nationalistic fervour and a new identity search. Several cult figures in the field of art, literature, music and dance contributed to the grand resurgence. The targeted task was daunting; the dance tradition was to be re-invented to be able to hold on to a new audience; it is to be elitist and move away from the devadasi- temple dance tradition which was then branded as "vulgar". Moreover, the new formatted dance had to be secular to be performed on a proscenium stage world over. It was a herculean task, but thanks to the admirable patience and perseverance of several committed dancers, dance activists and a number of nationalist reformers, a number of neo-classical dance forms emerged.

The nucleus of this movement was Madras, presently Chennai, followed by Kerala, Bengaluru and Hyderabad and the dance forms those arose out of the great churning were Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Kuchipudi. I am tempted to enlist Odissi dance of Odisha with the group of southern dance forms for the simple reason that it was the old dance of Kalinga that has been later refurbished and renamed Odissi. Kalinga had a vast territory stretching from the river Godavari in the south to the Ganges in the north. Professor Sundagomi Coperahewa of the Department of Sinhala in the University of Colombo strongly believes that present Odisha was in fact Kalinga. My southern aspirations are supported by the fact that the erstwhile grand Kalinga eventually shrunk and ultimately formed a part of Madras Presidency and remained so till 1936 when



Ramli Ibrahim and Dinanath Pathy discussing the stage arrangements of GANJAM Odissi with the help of a miniature model of Istana Budaya Theatre of Kuala Lumpur, 2015 (Photo: A.Prathap)

modern Orissa (recently changed to Odisha) emerged as a separate state. Odisha's southern connections are very strong. Still a substantial chunk of culturally significant territory of Odisha is with Andhra Pradesh, Srikakulam being one such potent place that supplied dancing girls and singers to the temple of Jagannatha at Puri. The *Record of Rights* relating to the Jagannatha Temple mentions *bhitara gauni* (Telingi Samprada Seva), servitors from the south who had a distinctive role as singers and dancers in the temple ritual (Pathy and Rath, 2012). The Odia language that forms the basis for carving out a separate Odisha state has three layers of dialects such as the Austric, the Dravidian, and the Aryan. Except the Aryan, the other two linguistic components have not been thoroughly explored. The exploration might lead to tribal and southern connections. This proposition would open up a tremendously rich area for comparative linguistic studies linking Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and countries of South East Asia. Potential areas for research may include not only the origin and evolution of languages but related cultural and material forms existing in these areas. Intentionally ignoring a territory amounts to ignoring a culture. Instances of assimilation and cross-pollination between cultures are sidetracked.

Present Odisha, a much shrunk territory, is composed of northern parts of erstwhile Madras Presidency, southern parts of Bengal-Bihar administrative unit and tracks of central province. The coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore were at one time the real Odisha which gave rise to the present Odissi. It was the town of Cuttack (not the religious centre of Puri), which now boasts of a thousand years of history and once the administrative seat of Odisha kings was the cradle of Odissi. The early 20th century Cuttack was much ravished and impoverished and had very little to contribute to making of Odissi except that it had a few modern theatre houses, those sheltered a few up-coming dancers like Pankajcharan Das, Kelucharan Mahapatra, Debaprasad Das, Mayadhar Rout and theatre personality and scholar like Kalicharan Patnaik and dance researcher Dhirendranath Patnaik who played a major role in the reconstruction of the neo-classical Odissi. These dancers and scholars evolved with the dance to the elevated status of maestros and authorities. The town of Cuttack was rather a neutral territory for dance otherwise beaming with activities relating to literature and freedom movement. The towering pre-Odissi personality was Madhusudan Das who among other notable endeavours wanted building Odisha as a separate state and promoted silver filigree and shoe manufacturing to give a boosting to industry. Modern icon of song and cinema Akshaya Mohanty was unconcern of Odissi and even despised it as anti-modern. Cuttack had developed a populist urban culture. The potters had given up their wheels and were fashioning images in "Oriental style". To cater to the needs of British administrators, Cuttack had developed a "Company School" that produced colonial style paintings on the themes of profession, places of interest, fairs and festivals.

Although the weavers of Nuapatna, Tigiria and Maniabandha were weaving tie and dye saris and stone carvers of Lalitgiri still lingering on to their family traditions, Cuttack had imbibed Bengali influences and later developed a mindset



Dinanath Pathy busy in making sketches for GANJAM Odissi in Sutra Foundation Library, 2015 (Photo: A. Prathap)

to counter those influences and get-back their lost Odia identity. The best examples are the community *Durgapuja* festivals, *Jatra* and *Kalakunja* which provided a stark contrast to the *Thakuraniyatra* with traditional fun fare and large wooden chariots with painted wooden and papier machie gods and goddesses of Berhampur.

Surprisingly a few noted Bengalis like Radhanath Ray and Gouri Shankar Ray championed the cause of Odia language and therefore it was no wonder that Bana Bihari Maity received patronage to teach dance which was a kind of Oriental dance that set the ground for Odissi. The other pioneers and promoters who contributed significantly to the revival of Odissi dance were the All India Radio Director P.V. Krishnamurthy, connected with Rakmini Devi's Kalakshetra and Babulal Doshi, a protégé of politician Jayaprakash Narayana as well as Dayal Sharan of Uday Shankar's Almora School. All these strands and affiliations very subtly influenced the makers of Odissi.

The strongest denial that gripped the mindset of the founding fathers was to push aside the *dakshini*, the southern, primarily by changing the nomenclature of the dance from *Dakhininata* to Odissi dance. The term *Odianata*, which if continued to stay, would have been the most befitting nomenclature because the language the people spoke was Odia. But this was also swept under the carpet. Even though Orissa was formed as a separate state on the basis of Odia language spoken in the territories, it was an irony that the dance of the state could not be

labeled as Odia. But as far as Odissi was concerned, Odia could not push aside Sanskrit with Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* connections as a constantly cited part of Odisha's history.

It was most unfortunate the way Odisha's rich southern connection was severed to proclaim a new identity. But this political consideration could not brush aside the genuine fact that Jagannatha, the new vaishnava identity, was largely the making of Cholas and Gangas from the south, so much so that the 12^{th} century enormous edifice of the Jagannatha Temple at Puri was the work of Anantavarman Choda (Chola) Ganga Deva. The new identity remained very much coastal, so also the dance. Even till date the dance has not been able to overcome the coastal inertia. With Pankajcharan Das and Kelucharan Mahapatra calling the shots at Jayantika, Puri became pivotal, even initially Jagannatha in the form of a tiny wooden doll was allowed to preside over the dance performances.

If one tries to understand the making of Odissi, one will be tempted to open up the Pandora box of Jayantika that contains confusions, confrontations and frustrations. The way the makers tried to subvert each other's actions and intentions that made it a political game of high order. The way Leela Venkataraman tears open the scrambling and dodges in her recent book, *Indian Classical Dance – The Renaissance and Beyond, 2015* is astounding. (Also see Pathy, 2006).

"With Pankajcharana's *mahari* leanings, he changed the *Mangalacharana Ganapati Vandana* to *Jagannatha ashtakam - Kalindi tata vipina* ... and even Debaprasad with his south Odisha associations, and his belief in the *Tandava*



Jagannatha Temple, Puri built by Anantavarman Choda (Chola) Ganga Deva



Anasara pata paintings of Ananta, Bhubanesvari and Narayana in which Bhubanesvari is painted as a shakta deity with a third eye, goad and snake noose. Jayapur, Koraput district (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1980)

Nrityakari Gajanana fell in line. While Sakhinata was believed to be associated with shaiva tantra traditions, Gotipua took its place as the quintessential vaishnava-tantra manifestations. The Jagannatha cult blends within its identity both the streams. Despite the shaiva/vaishnava preferences, initial decisions managed a measure of consent from all participants." ...

"Unlike a tradition that evolves, here was a consciously erected super structure, where choices were directed by considerations of evolving a totally regional form carrying no influences from outside the region (region being the coastal belt)." (Sailaja Ravi, 2009)

Post-independent Odisha saw the cult of Jagannatha emerging as a newly built-up Odia identity and the creative efforts of poets, writers, painters and dancers were directed to boost up a sophisticated, yet superfluous concept called the Jagannatha consciousness. A micro-study undertaken by us (Fischer and Pathy, 2012) on Anasarapati reveals how Bhubanesvari, the two dimensional appearance of Subhadra, initially a shakta deity was changed into a vaishnava deity and her emblems of trident, noose and goad as well as the third eye were replaced by lotuses. Her earlier leanings to Shiva-Ananta (Balabhadra) now shifted to Vishnu-Purushottama (Jagannatha). The subsidiary shrines of Vimala, Mangala and Lakshmi inside the Jagannatha Temple complex at Puri though project the feminine aspects of the male deities like Balabhadra and Jagannatha, their related importance in the cult wavered with the change of the mindset of the votaries of the cult of Jagannatha. The intension of Odia identity was to project Odisha as a territory of new-vaishnava revival with Jagannatha as the sole representative of a classical urban culture. All the attempts directed at the abolition of primitive practices or subverting them to the new order reflected a mindset that gripped the architects of

neo-classical Odissi. (But certain ritual practices like animal sacrifice connected with shakta tantra worship is still being carried out inside the Puri Jagannatha Temple complex though clandestinely. Shailaja Ravi, 2009, P. 20).







Kali, Osakothi wall painting by Hari Panda, Purushottamapur, Ganjam district
Lakshmi-Nrusimha, Acrylic Painting by Dinanath Pathy
Nrusimha stone sculpture, Simhachalam Temple, Andhra Pradesh



Performance by Sutra Dancers at Istana Budaya Theatre, 2015 (Photo: A. Prathap)

In the process, the *deshi* or the regional elements were miss-directed because the *deshi* had a strong footing in the *dakshini* and the primitive (read tribal) which were eventually scarified at the altar of neo-revival. The process of dance revival or the new dance formation by a set of overzealous dance activists lacked the kind

of intellectual input and aesthetic discern and the power to defend its ground against the overwhelming influences of Kalakshetra and its leader Rukmini Devi Arundale who used to proclaim that Odissi was part of Bharatanatyam. The group was lopsided and their ideas therefore contributed effectively in subverting all that constituted *dakshini*.

Mysteriously, this process of subversion is still in force which brings into effect the marginalisation of dialectical dance potentials (Pathy, 2006). This has also happened in the field of handicrafts with a set of instructors mostly recruited from Puri area in the State Handicraft Training School at Bhubaneswar who teach only Puri painting style. The tussle is active even to sideline several singing *gharanas* important being *dakshini* (read Paralakhemandi) and uphold the Puri *gharana* as the most classical and authentic. The attempts for literary supremacy by a group of coastal Odia scholars and authors with their standardization-overview has started killing the regional initiatives such as *dakshini* and *koshali* in the area of language and literature. In this broad branding scenario, the authentic voices are fast losing their original and palpable sublimity. The harm brought to *dakshini* in the "making of Odissi" of late is showing fissures in the Jayantika model. In fact the imposed model has become redundant and each dance teacher is trying to evolve, tear opening the cloak but sadly without a definite focus.

Odisha did not have existing musical vestiges which could be formatted for abstract compositions like *Jatisvaram* or *Tillana* in Bharatanatyam. Although Odissi was amply enriched by the experiences, Mayadhara Raut and Sanjukta Panigrahi had in Kalakshetra with regard to pan-Indian *hastamudra* or *hastabhinaya*, borrowing aspects of *Jatisvaram* would have been too obvious for *Pallavi* compositions. So a model was devised to use the well known Odia song compositions devoid of their *Sahitya* or literary contents. The founding fathers also denied to rely on Prahallada Nataka which had and still has a Carnatic musical format. But later when Bhubaneswar Mishra developed a few notable *Pallavis* such as Shaveri, Shankarabharana, Mohana and Kiravani with components of Carnatic music in which he was trained under Carnatic violinist Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, the Odissi dance teachers and dancers had no other go but embrace *dakshini* which of course came to them in a diluted form. In GANJAM Odissi, we wanted to rework with Prahallada Nataka with pronounced involvement of *dakshini*. We are aware, when Sharmila Biswas, a noted Odissi dancer from Kolkata used Mrudanga beats instead of *mardala* bols, there was hue and cry because the master behind the composition was Dhanurdhar Reddy of Lakshmipur, Ganjam.

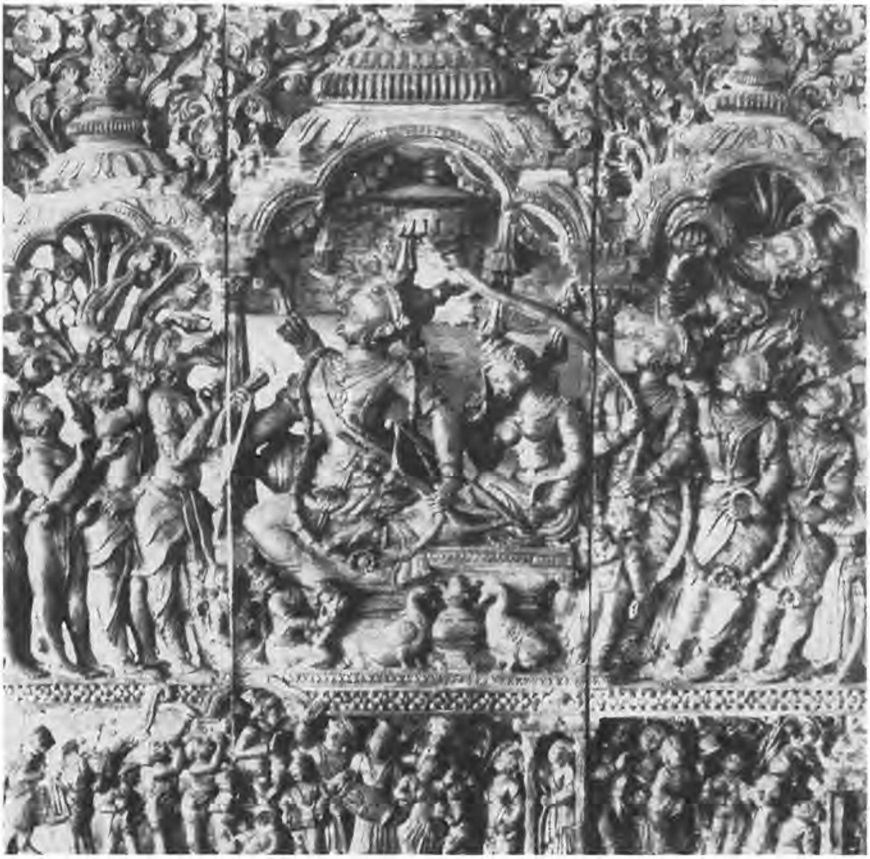
When I think of *dakshini's* misfortunes and the way it had been sabotaged in the efforts to carve out an Odia identity, I am reminded of the eminent Odia poet Radhamohan Gadanayak's poem *Mati*, the Earth. The poet chides the earth for not-forthcoming to claim an elevated position from the creator, when he was distributing largesses to the elements of nature. The sky got a position above the earth, the sun was allowed to move in the sky, the moon too got its nightly sojourn in the sky, the wind (tempest) was bestowed with the power even to move the



Facade of Ramaswamy Temple at Netanga near Bhanjanagar, Ganjam district with wood carvings on the theme of the Ramayana, 19th century, (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1978)

clouds so on and so forth. When questioned, the earth replied to the creator, "I bow to you wish". The creator reminded the earth that its wish could be too hard and suicidal, because he was allotting the earth a position underneath the feet of everybody to trod, to stamp and the earth would be ruptured, wounded and bleed. This would happen, the creator reminded, when the animate and inanimate objects would use it for their dwelling. Still the earth nodded its head in agreement. Days passed and then arrived a moment when everybody realized the earth's strength of conviction and sacrifice as well as the power of tolerance. The earth was hailed and branded as the mother of the universe.

After realising the wisdom of the earth who quietly snatched away the position to be the ultimate signifier, I was convinced of the potency of *dakshini*. My practice of various visual arts and the experience that I had gained touring several villages with my brother as a make-up boy and theatre-prop designer, had infused in me a strong conviction that all I saw and experienced was once Kalinga and *dakshini*.



Ramapattabhisheka, wood carving depicting the coronation of Rama from Dharakote palace, 19th century, Ganjam district (Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1984)

I was looking for a visionary artistic person with a cosmopolitan outlook and ability who could lift a fistful of earth and with it the lingering dance forms to emphatically declare, "This is Ganjam". The distant eastern horizon across the seas echoed with a thundering voice, "Yes I can". This was Ramli Ibrahim who since decades was practicing and promoting Odissi and Indian dance and had efficiently charted out a territory in the midst of a challenging racial and religious hegemony in the country of Malay, the present Malaysia.

If Malaysia is truly Asia, the way it is being promoted by Tourism, then I would say that Ramli Ibrahim's Sutra is truly a chunk of Kalinga, Odissi maestro Debaprasad's only overseas hope that smells *dakshini*. Ramli roped in his *guru-bhai* and long time collaborator, a talented dancer and dance composer, the only Odissi guru with a Sakhinata back ground from Ganjam, Gajendra Kumar Panda to be a partner in the ever new dance composition GANJAM.



Carved wooden ceiling on the theme of Rasalila dance, Viranchinarayana Temple, Buguda, Ganjam district, 19th century (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1978)

I considered it a unique opportunity to collaborate and when Ramli Ibrahim invited me to join this new venture, I reiterated my commitment to Ganjam and declared. "I am from Ganjam, so are my Images". Reaching Sutra Dance Theatre in Kuala Lumpur, I found the light designer Shivarajah Natarajan busy preparing light design plans for the GANJAM performance. The combined efforts resulted in a grand collaboration and a brilliant performance that brought to fore the forgotten dimensions of a significant culture.

We decided upon a few strategies and started exploring new frontiers. For *Mangalacharana* we culled from Prahallada Nataka. Nrusimha, the ferocious man-lion God was evoked in his *tandava* and *lasya*- Lakshmi Nrusimha aspects. The performance opened up to a challenging resume and the primordial deity of the *Odia Bhagavata – Namain nrusimha charana anadi parama karana*. (I bow at the feet of Nrusimha, the primordial cause of the universe) received the benediction of the Sutra dancers. The idea of Nrusimha touched upon several aspects of the theology. It in a way aspired to the concept of *stambha* or pole worship still prevalent in the domain of Vishnu's incarnations. *Mangalacharana* went beyond *Jagannathashtakam – Kalinditata vipina* and Devaprasad's faith in *Tandava nrityakari Gajanana* found its fullest expression because the lines of evocation were from Prahallada Nataka. These lines or the entire song had been without reason altered while the neo-classical Odissi was being reconstructed. Nrusimha



Nayika and Nayaka, Sutra Dancers performing *Sthai*, GANJAM Odissi (Photo: A. Prathap, 2015)

worship is still in vogue in south Odisha and is venerated in Simhachalam and was the cult deity of the eastern Gangas. (The temple was built by Chola king Kulathunga in the 11th century AD). The image of Nrusimha stands here in *tribhanga* pose, the signature posture of Odissi.

Nrusimha is the God of fire and furry and till the other day is was an enchanting sight to watch devotees dressed in black cloth moving with a wooden tray containing a metal image of Nrusimha in the villages of Ganjam district. They carried fire torches and danced vigorously while rolling live torches all over their body. The dance performance was breath-taking. The idea of invoking Lakshmi Nrusimha was a master stroke which combined in its aspects the shaiva tantra practices as well as vaishnava tantra traditions and reaffirmed Jagannatha's primitive attributes.

With *Mangalacharana*, the theatre of dance shifted from the coastal plains of Puri to the hill top of Simhachalam. This journey aimed at reaching the roots and this could be succinctly explained as an upward journey from Nilachala to Simhachala. This shift was aimed at opening new avenues, the most significant being the primitive and ferocious aspect taking along *sabda svara*, punctuating syllables. The journey unless understood along with its visual paradigms will seem as an ordinary shift of one particular song to another.





Processional Horse Dance, Ganjam district (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1978)
Dandanata procession, Ganjam district (Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2000)



Sutra Dancers performing Rama Bhajan, GANJAM Odissi 2015 (Photo: A. Prathap)

But visually speaking, it meant a lot, resultant of a mind blowing exercise and was dense with several dance sequences happening together. Master Ramli exploited the facilities available at Istana Budaya Theatre in Kuala Lumpur where GANJAM Odissi was premiered. When the No. 4 dance platform went high up and the golden lights were focused on the group of dancers led by Ramli displaying aspects of ferocious Nrusimha against the digital projection of a huge Nrusimha mask beneath an ornate arch, the spectators witnessed a luminous tableau with living molten images. The ensemble seemed to be a unitary shining image of Nrusimha or the true image of Simhachala-Nrusimha as adored during the festival of *Chandanyatra* (sandal festival) in the month of *Vaisakha* (May).

Similarly the *Sthai* hinted at the quintessential grace of both *Nayika* and *Nayaka* accentuating their essential bodily features. Instead of complying with the sculptural poses of temple images, the dancers articulated the scriptural stipulations those described the beautiful limbs. We referred to the noble, sublime and graceful qualities of *Nayika* as mentioned by south Indian author Nandikesvara in his *Abhinaya Darpana* (Patnaik, 2000) and those of the *Nayaka* as described by Mohmmed Shah in his *Sangita Malika*. I presume that the treatise was composed by some author-pandit from south India (Deccan) and dedicated to Mohmmad Shah. The physical attributes of the female dancer – *Tanvi rupavati shyama, pinonnatapayodhara.... etc.* fitted extremely well to the smart and accomplished dancers of Sutra Dance Theatre such as Divya Nair, Geethika Sree, Tan Mei Mei, Revethi Karthik, Thrisherna and others. Their chiseled body contours highlighted the aspirations of *Abhinaya Darpana* and justified the immaculate elegance of stone sculptures carved on temple facades. It is needless to emphasize here the qualities of an authentic *Nayaka* as possessed by master Ramli and his student Harenthiran. It is amazing how Ramli Ibrahim at the age of



Nrusimha, door panel, wood carving, Jagannatha Temple, Belaguntha, Ganjam district (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1978)

sixty two maintains a well balanced agile body and sets an example for his students and other dancers. The entire segment of *Sthai* was based on the lyrical stances of Sakhinata of Ganjam district thereby mitigating a long standing neglect to *dakshini.*

Rama Bhajan was a striking departure from the routine *Abhinaya* number and was set in the *nagarkirtan* tradition that upholds the name of Rama predominantly worshipped in several temples and shrines in south Odisha. I could refer to the exquisitely carved wooden facade depicting the stories of *Ramayana* in the Ramaswami Temple at Netanga near Bhanjanagar in Ganjam district. Visually the dance composition recreated the devotional fervour of dancers as depicted in the painted murals of the Jagannatha Temple, Dharakote, Radhagovinda Matha, Paralakhemandi and Narayanaswami Matha, Sariapalli in Andhra Pradesh. The upward stances, leaps and jerky movements of the dancers painted in these panels were transformed to actual dancing while the thin elongated bodies of Abtin Javid and Vanizha provided aspirational and devotional frenzy along with the stable and the well groomed body of Renuka Paniker offering the calming counter poise. The dancers were dressed differently from the routine Odissi in *ghagara* patterned skirts of Prahallada Nataka and imitated flowing fashion of Dasakathia dancers of Ganjam. Fluttering ends of long flowing orange and yellow turbans provided a couching effect to the moving dance scenario. This segment of the repertoire had several theatrical skits composed of the devotional dancers and the devotees who throng the *matha* premises as onlookers. The dancers could provide the frenzied mood and when in a group moved with the sliding platform, it created an impression of a passing procession of devotees performing *nagarkirtan* on the bank of a village pond with blooming blue lilies. The temple dancers were looking stunningly ravishing with their embroidered jackets, waist bands and nose rings. Their demeanour fashioned up by Tan Mei Mei and Suganthini Ratha Kerisan created an impression of Raja Ravi Varma's painted women figures with ingrained feelings of *dakshini.* The backdrop with the play of the blue lotus motifs was largely of Shivarajah Natarajan's idea though the motifs had been drawn by me. Symbolically we wanted to emphasize the *Rajivalochana*, blue lotus eyed Rama in the digitally operated backdrop. This created a pleasing contrast with colourfully dressed dancers and offered a classical overtone to the folkish rendering of the *bhajan* ensemble. However, the fantastic bright colours of orange and vermilion with sprinkles of black and gold demonstrated the earthy verve of south Odisha's folkdance forms.

The dance then moved on to *Pallavi* which was based on *Raga* Rasamanjari. Rasamanjari has been popularly accepted both in folk and classical song compositions. Its literary verbalization instantly hinges upon poet Upendra Bhanja's song – *Ramaniratana meghaku chahin* or *Vichitra Ramayana's Mantrimukhusuni kopevimsapani pushpaka jane vijekala* and brings forth memories of Prahallada Nataka or Sakhinata. The aim of enacting Rasamanjari in its abstraction is to emphasize its southern recessions. The *Pallavi* juxtaposed earthy movements



Krishna lifting the mount Govardhana, wood carving, Viranchinarayana Temple, Buguda, Ganjam district (Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1986)

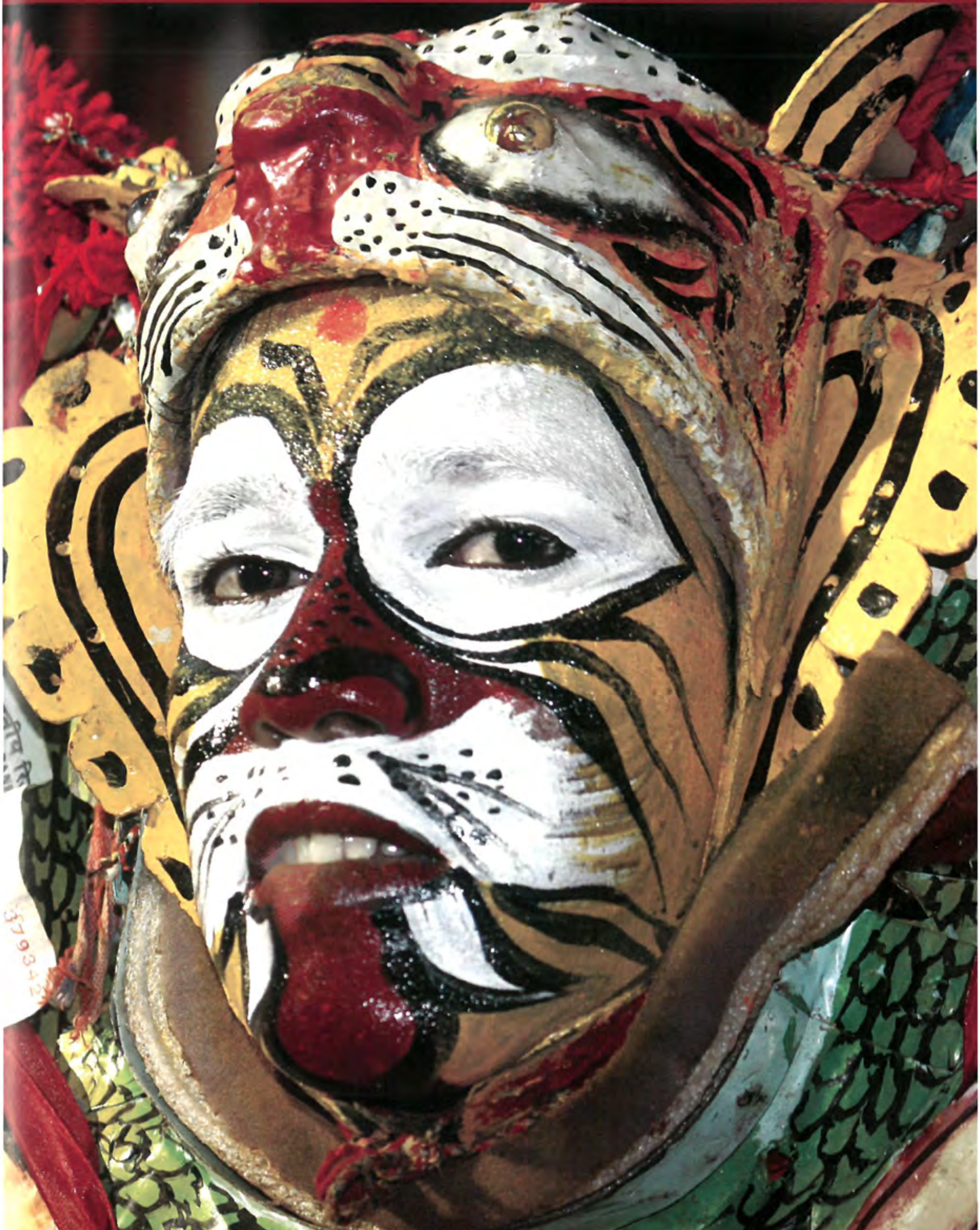
Sutra Dancers depicting the yoginis in GANJAM Odissi 2015 (Photo: S. Magen)

reminding one of the concept of *tridhara* of guru Devaprasad wherein he wanted to hold the tribal, folk and classical together to bring out the best. In order to give an earthy character to otherwise the abstract non-verbal forms, we created visual devices with digitally manipulated floral *kunja*, arbour designs those were based on the palm-leaf paintings of *Rasika Haravali*. When the dance progressed, it gave an impression that the dancers in their warm and colourful saris belonged to the painterly ambience of the palm-leaf painting. While giving due emphasis on the aspects of deconstruction, the *Pallavi* arrived at climaxing the undulated





Ramli Ibrahim, Divya Nair and Geethika Sree in GANJAM Odissi 2015 (Photo: A. Prathap)



A Bagha Nata performer, Ganjam district





Hiranya in Prahallada Nataka

Sakhipilas in Sakhinata



Radhapremalila

Kala-bagha

Modern dancers performing the cosmic dance of Vishnu









A painted face from rural Ganjam

Demon Viradha of *Ramayana* performing in a modern village theatre

Shiva looking into a mirror

Human tigers sporting dressed-up bodies









A *shakta* devotee dressed as *Kali* preparing to join the *Thakurani* procession





Koya Dancers, Koraput district (Photo: Government of Odisha)

Gadba Dancers with stripped hand woven saris, Koraput district (Photo: Government of Odisha)





Dhuli Danda, Acrobatics with geomatrical human formations in Dandanata, Ganjam district (Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2000)

arabesques and rhythms of Odissi. Use of the raised stage in the form of a tableau created a romantic pitch when the improvised stage lights accentuated the contours of the dancers almost drawing bright lights of longing against dark shadowy interiors of the arbours.

Yogini-Moksha performance was the climax of the GANJAM composition that opened up in a cow-dust hour when on the top of the Himalayas, one pays *darshan* to the great Yogi Shiva seated in close embraced with "mother" Parvati. Digitally operated mountain emerged from the primordial waters, which provided the backdrop. With the sequential change of mood of the dance, the colour and the pattern of the mountain changed. The hemispherical shapes within the mountain provided the clue to the perceptible change. Mountains in hemispherical shapes heaped one above the other are as old as the bas-reliefs in the Ranigumpha caves of Udayagiri and still persist as a distinguished motif in the painted murals of south Odishan temples, significant being the Viranchinarayana Temple at Buguda.

Yoginis emerged from the third eye of Shiva in multiplying numbers displaying terrific features. These were instantly identified with local *Thakurani* Goddesses one encounters on the Osakothi mural specifically painted during the celebration of *Durgapuja* in the month of Asvina (October) in a large number of villages in Ganjam district (Fischer and Pathy, 1995). The frenzied Goddesses dance vigorously in circles. When their excitement rose high, red flames leapt up in the mountain form as if the hills in the tribal areas of south Odisha caught fire in summer resulting in denudation of forests. These Goddesses who dwell in the mountain tops, mountain springs, deep forests and deserted fields danced in unison in their classical, semi-classical and folkish appearances and went on rampage. They displayed their blood thirsty demeanours - as Kali, Karali, Matangi, Bhairavi, Viloma, Ramachandi and Chinnamasta. The dance was so intense and vigorous that it created commotion. It was all blood (created by Sivarajah's lights) and battle cries unleashed Vivatsa and Bhayanaka *rasa*.

They at times appeared in their sublime and benevolent forms as Sarasvati, Kamala and Mangala. The great Goddess Mahamaya was then taken in a glittering procession on the stage and the Thakurani Jatra procession, the famous one of Berhampur town came alive. The regalia with *chhatri, trasa, chamara* and *brass pots* added glamour and visual curiosity. The *yoginis* enacted their earthly *lilas* which was eventually celebrated in the culmination of conjoining with Shiva, the supreme self, and then the various names (*nama*) and forms (*rupa*) merged in the great void.

Moksha highlighted the liberation of not only the dancers from their artistic selves but of the personified village Goddesses who attained union with the supreme Godhead Shiva. *Moksha* was charged with boundless energy shown at its best through the play of *sabda*.











Radhapremalila, Ganjam district
(Photo: Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi)

Radhapremalila, Ganjam district
(Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2008)





Radhapremalila, Ganjam district (Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2008)

The essential feature of *Yogini-Moksha* was the play of semi-classical and classical formats with concentric circles, squares and triangles through digitally operated tantric mandals. These tantric diagrams overlapped and projected an unending divine act of creation and destruction. The haunting melody of the song delivered in a shrill voice by Sangeeta Panda that accompanied the dance was highly aspirational.

Ganjam as a dance production revived and invigorated the spirit of the primitive virginity which resulted in a heightened and pleasurable experience. It neither appropriated nor juxtaposed the existing performing arts of Ganjam. It opened up new avenues and did set up a new tradition. Primarily it was created by visiting territories beyond the familiar and often-repeated dance compositions of today's Odissi.

For this, we have woven several dialectical dance vocabularies. For example; the vigorous stepping of the demon king Hiranayakasipu, musical *sabda svara pata* of Prahallada Nataka and folk Dasakathia, the narratives of the *lilas* and the graceful jerks of sakhinata, as well as the raw vibrancy of several folk theatres. We have infused the dance composition with sense of depth and linear exploration. The choreograph is layered with Ganjam textures. We have visualized the dance as the luminous *Brahmapuri pata* or the tribal Kotpad saris with play of brilliant colours in contrasting light and shades supported by motifs of palm-leaf illuminations from Ganjam Masters.

Historically, Ganjam brings forth the memories of Kalinga's maritime influences on Southeast Asia and greater India which brought out significant cultural exchange and assimilation. Ganjam, the production which is multi-valenced in this respect, pays tribute to the cross-fertilisation which one can interpolate with the above mentioned performing theatre forms of Southeast Asia's traditional performing arts. Professor B.D. Nandadeva of Fine Arts Department in the University of Kelaniya advances well thought postulation with regard to *tribhanga* (triple-bent posture) of naga, nagini, yakshi, Bodhisattva and devata images in the Sri Lankan Art since AD 3rd century to the 13th century. He further draws parallels between Sri Lankan sculptural forms with triple-bent postures and the posture of Odissi dance. He concludes that the similarity could be due to the migration of various service guilds of Kalinga (B.D. Nandadeva, 2015). One may discern vestiges of similarity- almost *déjà vu* - with their counterparts in Southeast Asia, particularly, those of Bali and Java. Simultaneously, Ganjam, a paean to a traditionally rich region is very much in keeping with the theme of the Festival –International Kuala Lumpur which is to "rediscover our heritage". The contemporisation of Ganjam into a sophisticated form and its ru-urban (rural urban) and folk-classical message defies easy compartmentalization. Ganjam as a dance form hints at collaborative studies in performing, visual and literary arts.

On the Odisha front, when several folk dance and theatre forms of Ganjam are facing ignominious death due to neglect and impoverishment, GANJAM, the



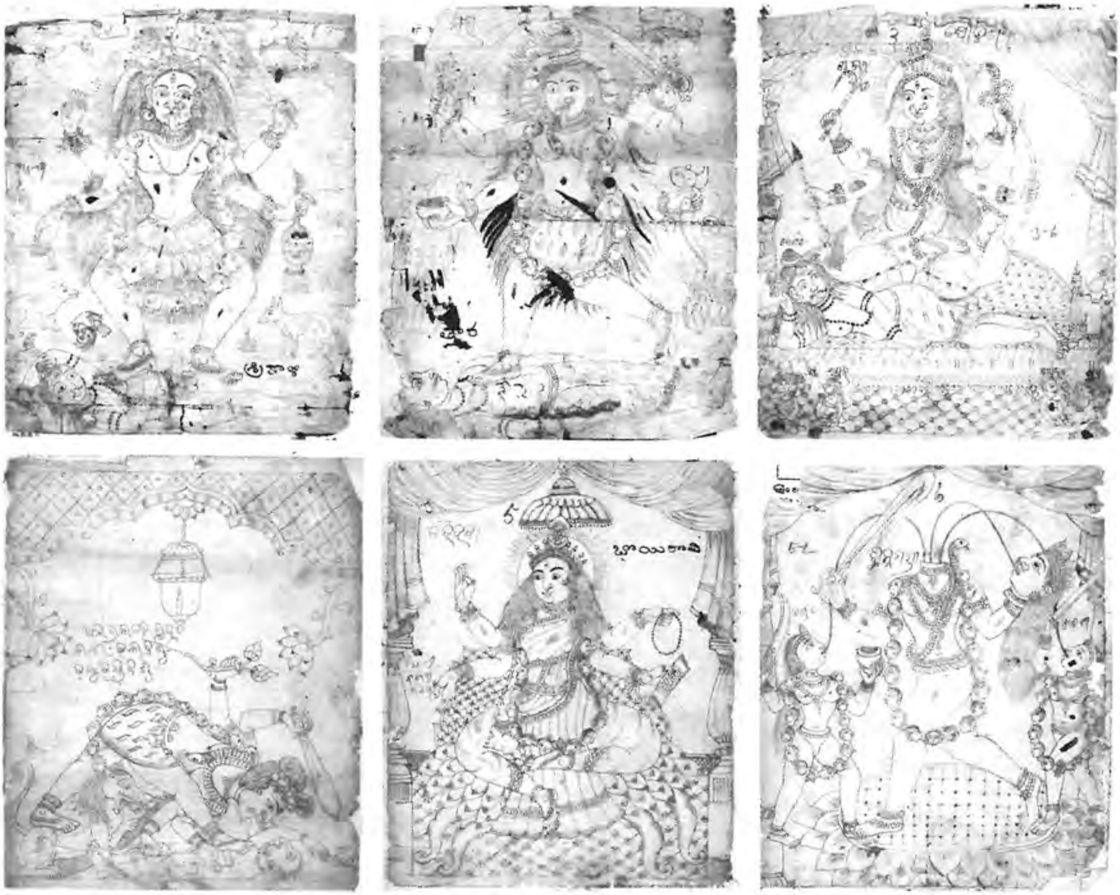
Sutra Dancers demonstrating the earthy verve of Folk Dance form in GANJAM Odissi (Photo: S. Magen, 2015)

dance performance has been able to regain some of the quintessential aspects of the region and elevate them to the status of international Odissi. Folk forms have high potentials and should not be ignored as something rustic and uncivilized, because they serve as the substratum. When these are explored, fashioned and given a structure, they tend to be classical. There is urgent need to design new dances exploring unused and neglected forms. GANJAM has precisely done this exercise fulfilling the aspirations of Guru Debaprasad Das. Just singing Upendra Bhanja, Kavisurya and Gopalakrushna's mediaeval poems as a sort of benediction reminder to the poetic ingenuiness of Ganjam now seems not enough. When Radhapremalila, Krishnalila, Ramalila, Sakhinata and Prahallada Nataka are being obliterated from the performing art arena of Ganjam due to unimaginative planning and bureaucratic intervention by the governmental bodies, such superficial actions, don't deserve merit. When chances of recovery of our lost performing heritage are almost zero, we need several Ganjam performances with sublime and subtle inputs of archaic 'Ganjam'. I am talking of two Ganjam-s, GANJAM as an international Odissi ensemble of forgotten essentials and Ganjam, the potential cultural territory which is in urgent need of relooking.

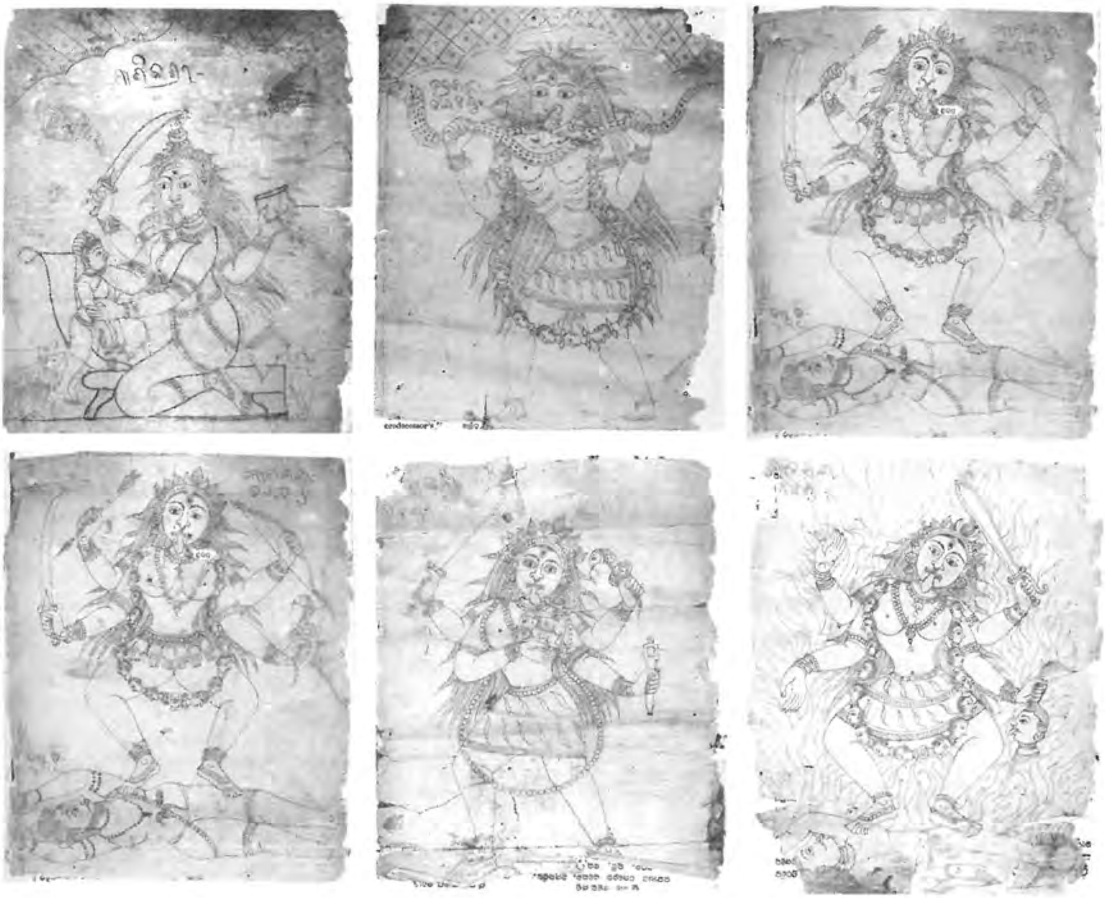
I must thank the visionary Datuk Ramli Ibrahim, Guru Gajendra Panda, artist and light designer Sivarajah Natarajan and the efficient and seasoned dancers of Sutra Dance Theatre whose concentrated efforts brought GANJAM Odissi to the international forum. As a branded Ganjami, I have derived utmost pleasure and satisfaction by working for the production as a visual artist. It has made a deep impact on me.



Nagarkirtan, wall mural, Jagannatha Temple, Dharakote, 20th century
(Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1984)



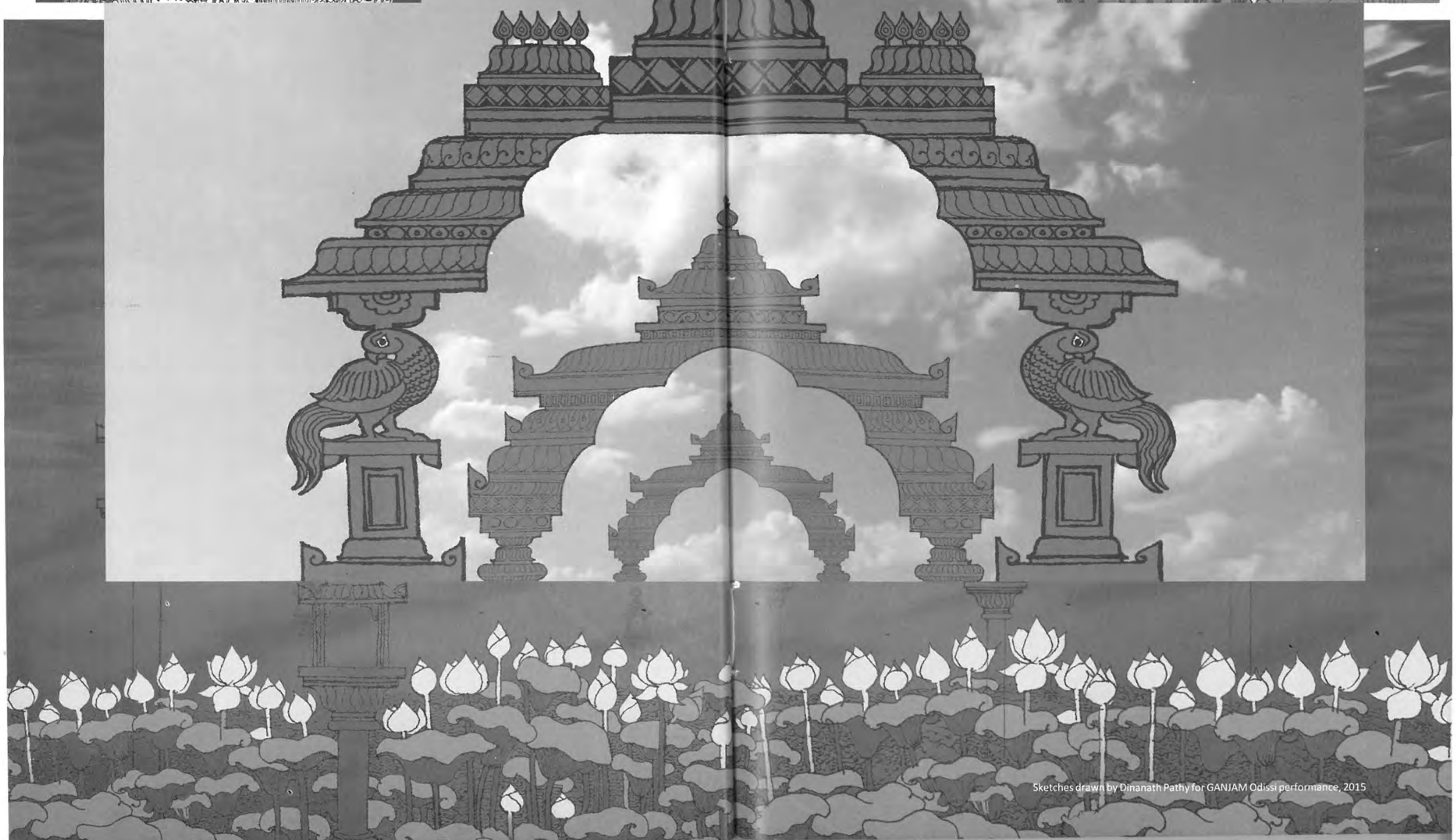
A few Drawings of Ashtakatyayani such as Manikasri, Bhadrakali, Mahakali, Siddhakali, Vijayakali, Smasanakali and Rudrakali



A few Drawings of Navadurga images such as Chhinnamasta, Bhairavi, Dhumavati, Bagala, Matangi, Kamala, Jayadurga, Mahadurga, Sayanadurga from Chitrakara Sketch book, Jayapur, Koraput (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 2002)







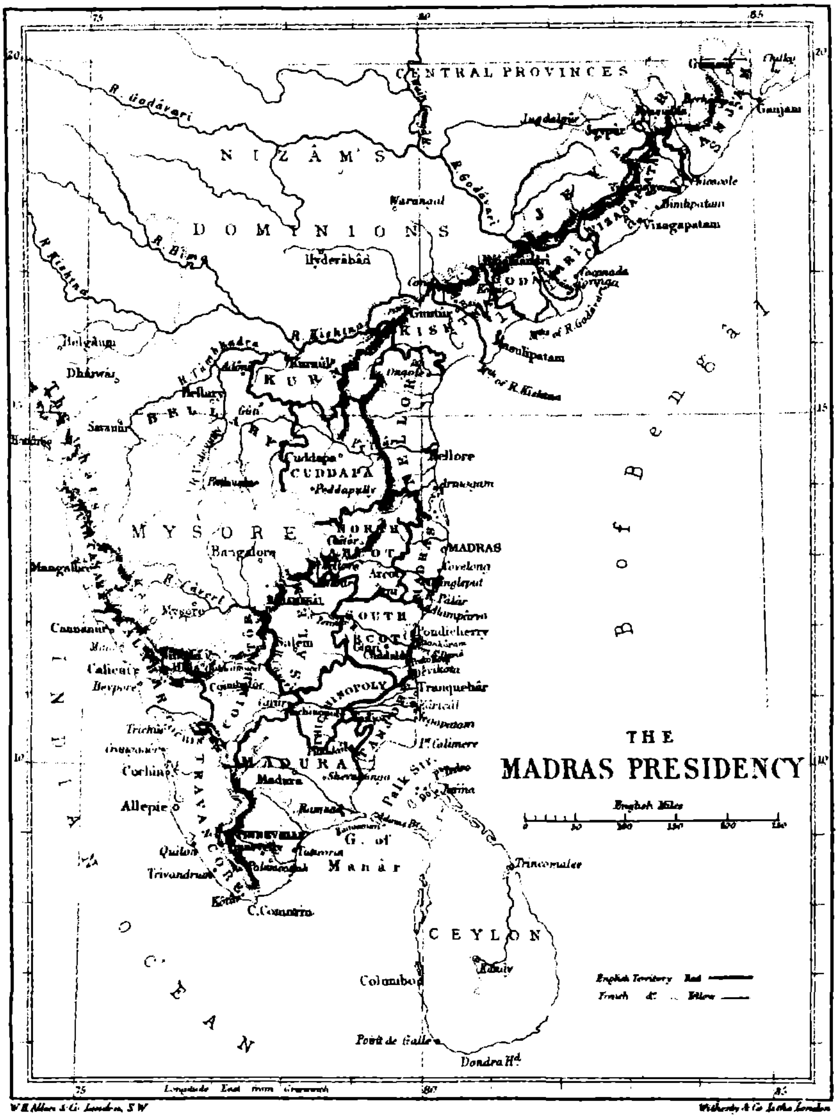
Sketches drawn by Dinanath Pathy for GANJAM Odissi performance, 2015



Baghanata, Panchamukhi Ganesha, Kali and Mangala, painted by Dinanath Pathy on canvas for exhibition - I am from Ganjam, So are the Images, 2015

Regional Traditions in South Odisha-History, Architecture, Art, Crafts and Rituals

Dinanath Pathy



South Odisha presently comprises the districts of undivided Ganjam, Phulbani and Koraput. The narrow strip of coastal land in-between the eastern ghat ranges and the Bay of Bengal is fertile. The area beyond the eastern ghat slowly rises in altitude, and gradually merges with the hilly tracts of the western and southern parts, which are covered with thick forests. The legendary Dandakaranya forest of the *Ramayana* is located on the southern extreme of this region in the district of Koraput. The important rivers which flow in this area are Rishikulya, Vamsadhara, Mahendratanaya, Nagavali and Indravati. Mahendragiri is the highest mountain which is mentioned in epics and legends.[1] The district of Ganjam. situated on the northern fringe, has more plain lands compared with the districts of Phulbani and Koraput. Originally, the district of Phulbani was a part of the Ganjam district[2] which was separated in the 1930s, for administrative convenience. In ancient times, parts of Phulbani (Boud subdivision) were known as Khinjili Mandala. The Jayapur estate, which has long connection with the southern Indian provinces significantly contributed to the growth of *dakshini* trends. In the past, a large area of Koraput district was in Trikalinga. A few of the old photographs show the way Dasahara was celebrated in mysore royal fashion, a hundred years ago. Without ignoring the primitive potential of Koraput, the focus in this study is on the present district of Ganjam and its cultural tradition, which is mostly identified with the cultural developments in this area. Though Odisha was known as Kalinga in ancient times, the country was generally divided into many parts with different names, during the course of its long history.: After the conquest of Kalinga by Asoka, this area appears to have been divided into two major parts, northern and southern Kalinga. By the seventh century, it was divided into three distinct regions, with the name Kalinga applied to the southernmost area, which apparently extended from the southern portion of modern Ganjam district to the river Godavari in Andhra Pradesh. The area in the north of Kalinga, extending to Chilika lake was known as Kangoda, while the northern portion of Odisha was referred to as Odra. The area between Mahanadi and Vaitarani, comprising the modern districts of Puri and Cuttack, was known as Tosali. The area in the north of Vaitarani, extending into the south of Bengal, was known as Utkala, corresponding to the modern districts of Cuttack (north portion) and Balasore. The western portion of modern Odisha was called Dakshina Kosala. The hilly country lying between Dakshina Kosala and the coastal area was known as Mahakantara.[3]

History

Around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, southern Kalinga (or Kalinga as it was generally known) played an important role in the evolution of imperial powers under the Ganga dynasty and helped the unification of all the different segments. The imperial Gangas were responsible for the construction of the Jagannatha Temple at Puri and other major temples in the Bhubaneswar area. The study of political and cultural history of Kalinga, from the aspect of the cultural tradition of southern Odisha, though stand quite apart in the historical time

sequence, yet the traditional links bind them together. This is our major concern in this study.

In the *Jataka* stories of Buddhist literature, there is mention of Kalinga under a line of kings, whose capital was located at Dantapura.[4] Some scholars identify it with Dantavaktrakota (near Srikakulam), which formed the southern boundary of the old Ganjam district.[5] According to the Jain H*arivamsa,* Bhagvan Mahavir, the 24th Tirthankara (sixth century B.C.) visited Kalinga[6] to propagate the cult of *ahimsa,* the main principle of Jainism. When we step into the early historical age, the first record about Kalinga has been mentioned in the accounts of the Greek writer, Megasthenes, which is reproduced by Pliny in his *Natural History.* The great Kalinga war was fought on the banks of the river Daya in the district of Puri, which drove Emperor Asoka to a life of non-violence. He left behind two important rock edicts, one of which is at Jaugada, on the banks of the river Rishikulya, in the district of Ganjam.

A large number of old bricks, terracotta, pottery, beads and other artifacts including punchmarked coins of the Mauryan age are still found in the area around Jaugada. The Matharas ruled over Kalinga from the fourth century A.D. From epigraphic sources, it is ascertained that the Matharas ruled for about two hundred years, till the sixth century A.D.,[7] when the early Gangas captured the territory. During the time of the Matharas; Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Buddhism flourished together with the help of state patronage. The Buddhist *Theris* had their settlement at Palur on the banks of the Chilika lake in Ganjam strict.[8] Some scholars identify Dantapura with Palur. The Salihundam Buddhist monastery in the old Ganjam district was situated on the banks of the river Vansadhara, which drains into the sea at Kalingapatana.[9] This monastery contains several remnants of Buddhist iconography.

The adventurous people of Kalinga had sailed overseas to Ceylon, Malaysia, the East Indies, Cambodia, Japan and Siam. This introduced Kalinga to a greater world, and cultural cross-currents influenced all these countries. The Khymer dynasty of Cambodia is said to have originally migrated from Kaliriga[10]. Recent research has identified the port town of Koddura, mentioned by Ptolemy (Geographical account of Ptolemy, A.D. 150), with a village called Koduru in Paralakhemandi z*amindari,* near the Mahendratanaya river. Alternatively, scholars also refer to Kottura near the Mahendra mountain not far from Barua, which was an important port of Kalinga."[11]

The early Ganga dynasty ruled from Kalinganagara, situated on the banks of the river Vamsadhara near Mukahlingam in the Paralakhemandi *zamindari* of the old Ganjam district. They embraced Shaivism. Their family deity, Gokarnasvamin, was installed on the peak of the Mahendra mountain. The Gangas of Kalinga played an important role in its political and cultural history for about four hundred years starting from the seventh century A.D. During this time, Hiuen Tsang, a Chinese traveller, visited Kalinga.[12]

The Svetaka Gangas who lived on the northern side of the Mahendra mountain (i.e. present Chikitigada area), became subordinate to the Bhauma-Kara kings, who succeeded the northern portion of Ganjam which formed a part of the old Kangoda kingdom. This used to be ruled by the Sailodbhavas before the first half of the eighth century.

The Sailodbhavas were rulers of the territory (the kingdom of Kangoda), which extended from the foot of the Mahendra mountain in the south, up to the river Mahanadi in the north, covering the modern district of Ganjam and Puri.

After the reign of the Sailodbhavas, the country lying between the Mahendra mountain and the Rupanarayana river was taken over by Bhaumas, who patronaged Buddhism. Three copper-plate grants belonging to the Bhauma-Karas have been discovered from the district of Ganjam.[13] From these grants, it is known that they ruled for about two centuries. Towards the middle of the tenth century, the dynasty became extinct. This was a time when the Somavamsi king, Yayati II of Dakhina Kosaḷa, annexed the coastal tracts of Utkala (Tosali) to his kingdom, and the Ganga kings of Kalinganagara also attempted to capture Utkala, consequently entering into a serious rivalry with the Somavamsis, The Somavamsi kings, who were designated Trikalingadhipati, seem to have established matrimonial links with the Bhanjas of Vanjulavaka, and the Gangas of Svetaka.[14]

Yayati II was invited by the people of Kalinga, Kangoda and Utkala to hold the reigns of the administration. The southern limit of his kingdom was fixed at Mahendragiri, which divided Kalinga into two parts. The southern side of Mahendragiri remained as before, under the early Gangas of Kalinganagara, while the northern side was in the hands of the Somavamsi kings. This did not last long. In A.D. 1076, Rajaraja I invaded *Kodala* and the hilly tracts of Odra, which were in the possession of the Somavamsis. A few years later, Rajaraja's son, Maharaja Chodaganga Deva, attacked Utkala and annexed it to his kingdom along with Kangoda and Kosala, thus creating the kingdom of Trikalinga. The boundaries of this kingdom extended far into the Ganges in the north and to the river Godavari in the south. Chodaganga shifted his capital from Kalinganagara, near Vamsadhara river, to Chaudvara-Kataka, on the banks of the river Mahanadi.[15] He also constructed the great temple of Jagannatha at Puri.

After shifting the headquarters, a collateral branch of the Gangas stayed over in the Rishikulya valley. Two copper plate inscriptions discovered from Polasara in Ganjam district throw some light on this lineage.[16] Their capital was Kalyanapura, situated near Rishikulya, which is yet to be identified. Yet another branch of the Gangas lived in the southern parts of Ganjam, which was named Ambabadi Mandala.[17]

The imperial Gangas ruled over a vast territory, and for the first time different tracts of Kalinga, Kangoda, Odra, Utkala and Kosala were unified. After the Gangas,

the Suryavamsis ruled this unified kingdom (Odisha) from A.D. 1435 to 1533. In A.D. 1559 , Mukunda Deva of the Chalukya dynasty, who possessed the title of Harichandan, usurped the throne of Odisha. He came from the Telugu speaking region and was murdered in A.D.I568.

In A.D.1560, when Odisha was overrun by the Muslims, it was consolidated and brought under their control. It formed a part of the Chicacole (Srikakulam) *sarkar.* Different *faujdars* and *naibs* continued to rule over the Chicacole *sarkar* until it was ceded to the French in A.D. 1753. Under Muslim rule, the district of Ganjam was known as Ichhapur division. The Jayapur (Jeypore) *zamindari* (now in the district of Koraput) was in the Vizagpatnam division. Both these divisions were governed by the *faujdar* at Chicacole. The East India Company received five districts of the northern *sarkars* as *inam* free gift from the Emperor of Delhi in A.D. 1765.[18] As such, these districts remained under the Madras government till A.D. 1936 when a separate Odisha province was formed. On this occasion the Jayapur za*mindari* and the Ganjam (Jayapur) region were both removed from the Madras presidency, and merged with Odisha.

There were twentytwo *zamindaris* in south Odisha.[19] These were: (1) Hautghar or Athagada,) Burgur° or Badagada, (3) Beerudy, (4) Burasingy or Budasinigi, (5) Cikiti, (6) Dharakote, (7) Ghumusar, (8) Huma, (9) Jerda or Jarada, (10) Jellentra or Jalantara, (11) Jayapur (12) Khallikote, (13) Moherry, (14) Mundasa or Manjusa, (15) Paralakhemandi, (16) Pratapgerry or Sanakhemandi, (17) Paloor, (18) Secrghur or Seragada, (19) Surada, (20) Suringi, (21) Turla, and (22) Vizianagar or Badakhemandi.

Of these twenty-two *zamindaris,* Jayapur is in the present district of Koraput. The others are in the district of Ganjam, with exception of Mandasa, Surangi and Turla, which are in the present Andhra Pradesh.

Most of the *zamindars* of Ganjam derived their power and estates from the Gajapati kings of Odisha, who granted them their lands subject to two conditions: feudal service, and control of the wild aboriginal tribes of the hills, the Khonds and Savaras. Owing to the inaccessibility of their estates, the zam*indars* gradually arrogated to themselves, as petty inconsequential king.[20] At times, *zamindaris* were also annexed by the Khurda kings. In 1593, Ramachandra Dev occupied eight *zamindaris* such as Ghumusar, Khallikote, Kodala, Athagada, Chikiti, Seragada, Paloor and Tikali.

South Odisha and the Cult of Jagannatha

Although south Odisha was a separate administrative entity, it had very close links with the central authority (the Puri and Khurda kings) as far as cultural traditions are concerned. Lord Jagannatha was believed to be at the basis of this politico-cultural tie. One of the fascinating aspects of the Jagannatha cult is its intrinsic relationship with the political power in Odisha.[21] Although the cult had



Narasimha Dev worshipping the Triad, Viraja, Lingaraj and Purushottama

originally developed in Purl, from a certain period onwards, it was drawn into the mainstream of the political evolution of Odisha, to such an extent that kingship became part of the cult, and the cult became part of the Odishan kingship, and its main source of legitimation. This mutual osmotic penetration is closely linked with the formation of the medieval Odishan empire by the Gangas in the twelfth century, which unified the southern homeland of Kalinga with central and northern Odisha.[22] This new relation between the Jagannatha cult and kingship in Odisha found lasting manifestations, such as the construction of the present monumental Jagannatha Temple in the middle of the twelfth century culminating in the ritual dedication of the whole Odishan empire to Lord Jagannatha in the early thirteenth century. Narasimha Deva's concept of kingship (which finds a far distant echo in the *zamindaris* of south Odisha, and more particularly in Dharakote), is best known from a series of sculptures of the Sun God at the world famous temple of Konarka, which he constructed in about AD 1250.[23] Most important for our study of the Jagannatha cult and its continuity in the regional traditions are those sculptures which depict King Narasimha worshipping a triad consisting of a Shivalinga. Purushottama and Durga Mahisasuramardini. The presence of the Jagannatha Temple close to the palace, and a Shiva and Shakti shrine inside the palace compound of Dharakote, reflect the traditional concept of kingship in a remote *zamindari,* even after a lapse of six hundred years. This system of triad, worship is also prevalent in other *zamindaris* of south Odisha, where it has taken the shape of the Durgamadhava cult in a kind of duo worship, Shiva being dropped or neglected.[24] But the presence of a Shiva temple inside the palace complex of Dharakote, makes the tradition more specific and resilient.



Durga Madhava, painted wooden plaque, 20th century

Following the model at Puri, Jagannatha temples have been built all over Odisha. This practice continues even today. In south Odisha alone (Ganjam, Phulbani and Koraput), there are one hundred and ninety temples dedicated to Lord Jagannatha in one of his various forms, each one registered as independent religious institutions.[25]

As for Ganjam, there are strong historical ties with Jagannatha. In the wake of the Muslim raids, the Puri idols were taken across the Chilika lake to Banpur region, or into Ganjam. This happened repeatedly, so that south Odisha was the actual home of the Puri gods on several occasions.[26] The tradition of building Jagannatha Temples in several places in Odisha, and particularly in *Gadajata* areas of central and western Odisha, and in the *zamindaris* of south Odisha became very important from the aspect of their administrative and religious links with the kings of Puri and Khurda, during the time of the Gangas and the Suryavamsi Gajapatis, and also later. After the breakup of the Odisha empire in A.D. 1568, the kings of Khurda, though powerless, were recognised as the superintendents of the Jagannatha Temple at Puri.[27] This is why people of the Odia-speaking tracts, irrespective of the political and administrative units they belong to, invariably mentioned the *Anka* year of the *Rajas* of Khurda in almanacs, in the horoscopes of the newly born, in official documents such as *sanandas,* and in literary and scholarly works.[28]

For the past several centuries, more specifically from the twelfth and thirteenth century onwards, Jagannatha has played a significant role in the political and religious life of Odisha. The Jagannatha temples have been the source of both religious and political power. During these seven hundred years, a great tradition has been built around these temples, which has far greater impact on the socio-cultural life of the people. This tradition has become vital for the Odia people, and has, therefore, been cultivated, not only at Purl but all over Odisha.

Architecture

The Odishan style of architecture, as a separate class, is generally termed Kalingan architecture.[29] However, the Kalinga region, as discussed above, also excels in temple building activity. This probably began in the Gupta period, and still continues to the present day. The earliest temple structures are found on the peak of the Mahendra mountain.[30] There are three temples—Yudhisthira, Bhima and Kunti — which is also known as Gokarnesvara. In some other accounts, we also find mention of Arjuna temple in the group. The Gokarnesvara Temple is the earliest Shiva temple of south Odisha.[31] But, even this temple appears to have been constructed from stones belonging to an earlier period. From the Buguda plates of Madhavavarman, it is recorded that Pulindasena, a leader of the Kalinga Janata, worshipped the God Svayambhu on the top of this mountain.[32] The Gangas installed an image of Gokarnesvara on the mountain as their family deity. The small Bhima Temple at the highest point on the mountain, ascribed to the Gupta period, is a crudely constructed *pidha deula,* bereft of decoration. The Kunti Temple consists of a *deula.* It is evident from the scattered debris and pavement that there was originally a *Jagamohana* attached in front of it. The temple is of the *rekha* order. The *bdda* has a *pancha-ratha* plan. The images in the niches are earlier than the structure. The Yudhisthira Temple consists of a *deula* fronted by a hexagonal wall. There are no sculptures on the temple, which is obviously a late construction. There is an inscription of the Chola king, Rajendra Chola, on the lintel belonging to the early part of the eleventh century.[33] The emblems of the Chola and his Pandyan feudatory, the tiger and two fishes, are engraved below the inscription. Scholars differ in ascribing dates to these temples. One view puts these temples to an early period, virtually placing them at the beginning of the evolution of Odishan temple architecture, while the other takes this group (Kunti and Yudhisthira) to quite a late period in the thirteenth century. However, it is with this group that the temple building activity begins in south Odisha.

The Nilakanthesvara Temple on top of Jogamunda hill at Padmapur in the Gunpur subdivision of Koraput district is ascribed to the seventh century.[34] It has an inscription which preserves a small genealogy of three Buddhist *acharyas* — Candralekha, Bhaddhakhan and Dharmakirti — suggesting that the monastery of the famous *acharya* Dharmakirti was located on this hill. The temple is a plain *pidha-deula* standing at eleven and a half feet height, built on single blocks of sandstone. The pyramidal roof has only two tiers and is crowned by an *amalaka.*

The Shiva temple at Badagan is situated near a tributary of the river Rishikulya, a few kilometres from Bhanjanagar in the district of Ganjam. In the general outline and decoration of the *gandi* and the *triratha* plan of the *bdda,* the temple resembles seventh century temples at Bhuvaneswar.[35]

The Madhukesvara Temple at Mukhalingam on the bank of the river Vamsadhara in the present district of Srlkakulam of Andhra Pradesh belongs to the ninth century[36]. This depicts the style of temple building of south Odisha. The

temple is surrounded by a high wall with two gateways one on the south and the main entrance on the east. The outer entrance gate on the east is in the shape of a *khakara deula* with three *amalakas* on the ridge of its roof. The temple is of the *panchayatana* class with a small shrine at each of the four corners of the compound, in addition to the main shrine which consists of a *deula* and *Jagamohana.* There are three *khakara* shrines, on the south, west and north sides of the compound. Several more structures were added at a later date. A large number of loose sculptures are found inside the compound wall, and many scattered throughout the village suggest that there were, at one time, more than three major temples in existence. The Somesvara temple at Mukhalingam, belonging to the tenth century, is another example of Kalinga temple structure, showing Chalukyan influences. The temple consists of only a *deula* with *bdda, tri-ratha* in plan, belonging to the beginning of the tenth century.[37]

Closely related to the Madhukesvara Temple in respect of iconographic and stylistic aspects of the cult images, and possibly the work of the Ganga kings, is the temple complex near the village of Paikapada in the district of Koraput. This complex consists of a number of temples extending over a continuous period of architectural activity. From a stylistic consideration, the temple of Somesvara at Mukhalingam, and the temple of Patalesvara at Paikapada are more closely related. The latter temple is most probably constructed by artisans from the same workshop. Situated at a short distance from the Madhukesvara Temple of Mukhalingam is the Bhimesvara Temple, which consists of a square *deula, antarala* and rectangular *Jagmohana.* The *bdda* of the *deula* is *tri-ratha* in plan. Stylistically, the images of the Bhimesvara appear more strongly influenced by Chalukyan traditions than the other temple sculptures at Mukhalingam. From an inscription in the temple, the date of the construction can be ascribed to the beginning of the eleventh century.[38]

There is another Shiva temple made of bricks situated near the village of Nagri Katakam, a few kilometers east of Mukhalingam. This temple, mostly in ruins, bears several tenth and eleventh century stone images.[39]

A number of temples in the Odishan style exist in the northern part of Andhra Pradesh, particularly in the Vizianagaram district, which was within the boundaries of Kalinga. As in the case of the Somesvara Temple at Mukhalingam, the style of these temples, though predominantly Odishan, shows strong Chalukyan influences. This is particularly in respect to iconographic details and minor decorative motifs. The general decorative programme is archaic in nature and the overall plan is simple, though ornate in detail. The temple of Dibbesvara is situated in the village Sarapalli. This temple consists of a *deula,* and stands on a low *pitha,* mostly buried. The *bdda* is *tri-ratha* and the design is based on the structure of Somesvara. Closely related to the Dibbesvara are three temples situated in the village of Jayati in Vizianagaram district. The largest of the temples, the Mallikarjuna, has been constructed with modern materials. Several detached images lie in front of the structure. The most ornately decorated of the two smaller temples is the Rajarajesvari Temple. This temple is in a poor condition. The *pitha* of a

Jagamohana is visible in front of the *deula*. The *deula* appears to have sunk. The *bdda* has a *tri-ratha* design as on the Dibbesvara temple.

The Dakhinesvara Mahadeva Temple is situated in the village Jira in the district of Ganjam. The temple, probably built at the site of an earlier temple, belongs to the *pidha* order which is typical of many later structures. The walls are mostly plastered over with only a few small sculptures visible, in addition to the *parsvadevatas* and *dvarapalas*. At the foot of Krishnagiri hill, situated between Khallikote and Athagada, there are a few Shiva Temples.[40] Among them, the temple of Muktesvara and Jhadesvara are famous. Both these temples have been constructed by Chodagangadeva in the twelfth century. There is an inscription at the entrance to the Muktesvara Temple dated in the *Saka* year 1064 corresponding to A.D.1142.[41]

The Mahalingesvara Shiva temple is situated at the foot of the Jillundi hill, in the *zamindari* of Athagada, in the district of Ganjam. The temple belongs to the *rekha* order, and has a *mukti mandapa* porch with sixteen pillars.


Nirmalajhara Temple, Khalikote

In and around Purushottamapur, in the district of Ganjam, there are a large number of temples dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu, such as Guptesvara, Tumbesvara and Sundara Madhava. The most popular vaishnavite temple of the Ganjam district is Sundara Madhava, built by Purusottama Deva (A.D. 1467-1497) to commemorate his victorious campaign against Kanchi.[42] The Guptesvara Temple is situated on the top of a hill near Govindagada. Close to the hill is the Tumbesvara temple, with an inscription of Anangabhima Deva III (A.D. 1211-1238). Besides, there are also other Shiva temples of the thirteenth century A.D. These are Uttaresvara at Pandia, Nilakanthesvara at Nuagan, Sakalesvara at nearby Daluapalli and Kalesvara at Kharida. On the banks of the river Mahendratanaya, the temple of Nilakanthesvara is another Ganga monument built by Mukunda Deva who ruled Khemandi from A.D. 1656 to 1674. Nilakanthesvara is regarded as the family deity of the Ganga house hold in Paralakhemandi.[43]

Disintegration of Central Power and Rise of Local Rajas

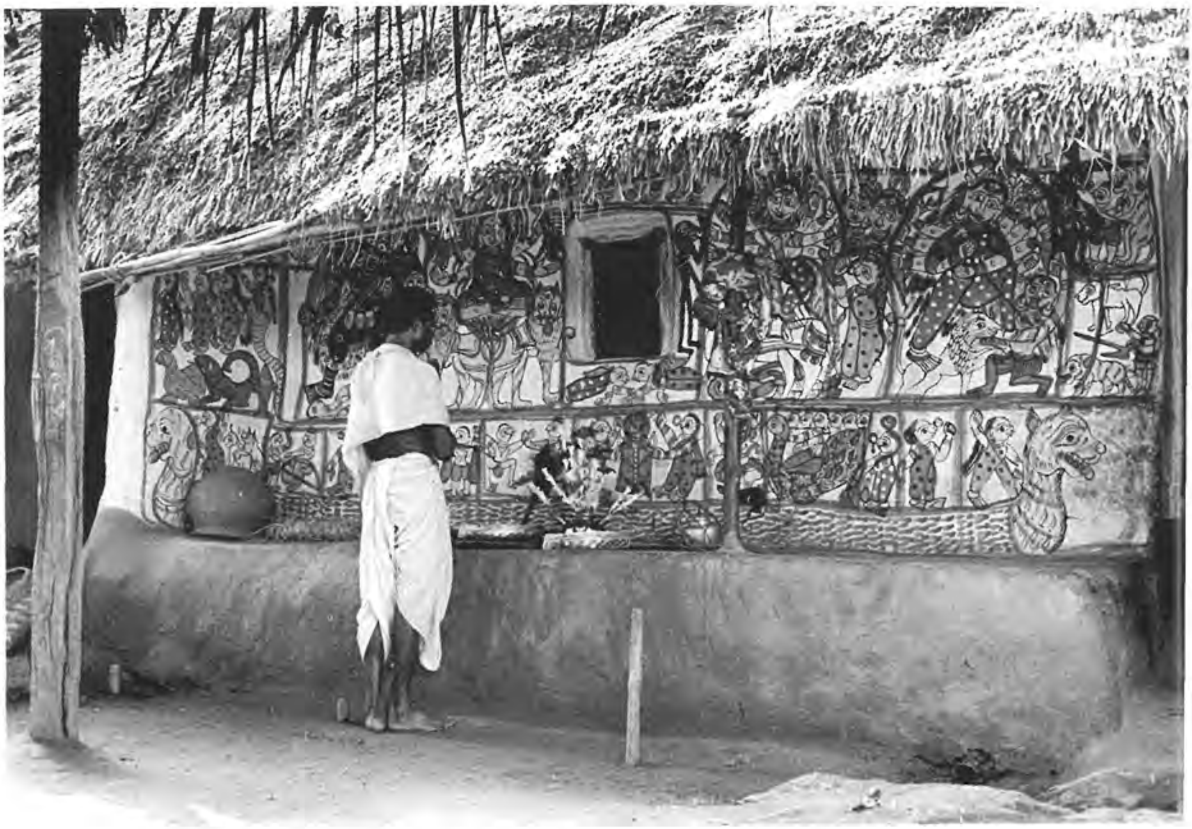
This illustrates a century's temple building activity, supported by various rulers of the Kalinga region. After the imperial Gangas had shifted their administrative unit from Kalinga nagara in the south, the focus of building activity

was also shifted to the Puri-Cuttack area. This is how all the large temples of Odisha, like the temples of Jagannatha, Konarka, etc. were built in this area. Central power had disintegrated in the sixteenth century, and the responsibility of patronising art and architecture fell into the hands of local *rajas* and *zamindaras* who treated their administrative units as mini kingdoms. By .this time, the waves of the Bhakti movement assumed the greatest importance in religious preferences, and the cult of Jagannatha, which by this time had been identified with the worship of Krishna (cult of Radhakrishna), reached the regional pockets.[44] Consequently, the growth of Jagannatha temples in several areas all over Odisha, and more politically in the district of Ganjam was apparent. Along with the Jagannatha temples, the temples dedicated to Shiva and Shakti were also constructed. These Shakti temples considered the local and tribal deities a necessity for the consolidation of power of kingship. The *Bhakti* movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had the missionary zeal to reestablish the Brahmanical order through the preachings of religious messages. Therefore, several *mathas* (monastic orders) with *mahantas* at the apex of the organisation sprang up. South Odisha witnessed a phenomenal growth of *mathas* with land endowments to support their functioning. The construction of Jagannatha temples did not follow any specific pattern and depended on circumstantial conveniences. However, these aspired to becoming miniature models of the Jagannatha Temple at Puri. This model structure consisted of four chambers as in Puri, or three chambers, i.e. the *deula, mukhasala (jagamohana)* and the *bhadramandapa (*dancing hall and hall of offering combine). Examples of this model exist at Dharakote and Khallikote. In certain cases, this model was further simplified to a two-chambered temple with the *deula (sanctum)* and *mukhasala* (porch). Examples of this model exist at Digapahandi and Athagada. The *matha* had a different type of architectural planning.[45] The *matha* complex accommodated a shrine that may be or may not be of the shape of a *rekha* or *pidha* temple, residential apartments for the *mahanta,* devotees, temple servants and the menials. Provision was also made for houses to store grains. A palm-leaf manuscript library was also a part of the complex. At times, the *mathas* were confused with temples. The Viranchinarayana Temple at Buguda has no appearance of either a *rekha* or *pidha* temple and it has also a *mahanta,* though it is commonly known as a temple.

Art and Craft Traditions

Besides the temple-building activities, the craft traditions of south Odisha were uninterrupted for several centuries. The people who carry on these traditions are both tribals who live in the hilly tracts, as well as the non-tribal folk who inhabit the plains, The art and craft traditions are intimately linked with the religious and social practices of the people. Their survival has been possible owing to rituals in the families and in temples.

A recent survey has revealed that there are about fifteen hundred craft families settled in different villages[46] of the district of Ganjam, who are practicing







Osakothi painting, Ganjam district
(Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1980)

Wall mural, Navagunjara
Jagannath Temple Dharakote

Wall mural, Kanchi kaveri, Srikurmam
Temple, Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh





Painter Hari Panda and Prakash Mahapatra (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1980)

various crafts. The total number of craftspersons engaged in handicraft production would be around four thousand. The important crafts are *pata* painting (which includes mural paintings in the temples), Osakothi paintings, palm- leaf paintings, stone carvings, wood carvings, ivory and horn carvings, appliques, *dhokras,* metal castings and other minor crafts. The artistic traditions are so inborn that the *Maharanas* (carpenters) can still construct temples preserving the purity of local styles following *Silpa-Shastra* texts. In the village Mathura in the district of Ganjam, a few kilometres from Dharakote, there are large groups of *artisan* families who are expert temple builders. A few of them are in possession of *Silpa-Shastra* texts written on palm-leafs. Similarly in Dharakote town, two families of *Maharanas* are engaged in temple construction at far off places in the district.

In the field of painting, the area preserves its own style. Most of the temples and *mathas* of south Odisha contain paintings[47]on their walls. These mural paintings are extremely important for the study of the wall painting tradition in Odisha. The earliest mural paintings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century are in the Viranchinarayana Temple at Buguda, Srikurmam Temple, Jagnnatha Matha at Kanchili and Radha Govinda Temple at Sariapalli in the district of Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh. There are a number of other places with temple mural paintings. It is interesting to find that most of these places are in the capital towns of the *zamindaris.* The Radhakanta *matha* in Digapahandi has Krishnalila panels on the upper reaches of the walls in its *mukhasala.* The Chaitanya matha, Narayana matha and Gopinatha matha in Chikitigada also have a few panels in the *baharamandapa.* The Srikalika Temple at Jayapur town in the district of Koraput has beautiful mural paintings of Shaktis such as Dasamachandi, Navadurga, Ashatakatyayani, etc. which have been unfortunately lime-washed and replaced with new paintings. These paintings used to bear bilingual inscriptions with Telugu and Odia scripts[48]. The Jagannatha Temple at Buguda had two unique figures of Brahma and Shiva which have been covered with lime-wash and repainted crudely. The paintings of Srikurmam Temple show clear Andhra influences. Those of the Meliaput Temple also depict Kirshnalila scenes. The interiors of Jagannatha Temple



Painted door and the artist (Photo: Jyoti Bhatt, 1986)

at Matha Kancheli in Andhra Pradesh are illustrated with the *Ramayana* themes. These are also influenced by the Andhra style of paintings. The paintings of Radhakanta *matha,* in Paralakhemandi are from the *Ramayana* episodes. Of all these south Odisha paintings, those at Dharakote are the best specimens of high linear style. The ones at the Jagannatha Temple at Puri have been redone at intervals and there are genuine doubts about their antiquity. As a result, setting aside the Gupta period murals at Sitavinji in the district of Keonjhar which stand far apart in style and chronology, the murals of south Odisha are the earliest ones to be considered as beginning of Odishan regional painting style. These depict a linear quality which goes very well with the work of *chitrakaras* and palm-leaf painters.

Osakothi paintings are a specialty of this region.[49]This tradition is still alive and it is not surprising to find hundreds of artists from Brahmins to untouchables, involved in making Osakothi paintings. *Osa* (penance) and *kothi* (diagramme) paintings are both based on Shakti worship traditions at village level. All the popular local *Thakuranis* of both folk and tribal origin found place in this worship, along with a few classical deities. This *Osa* is observed in the month of *Asvina* (October/November) during the celebrations of *Dasahara.* The spread of Osakothi paintings centres the town of Aska. The second important is located around the town of Paralakhemandi.



A typical village, Ganjam district (Photo: Eeberhard Fischer, 1980)

The paintings are done on the entrance walls and interiors of the community houses, or on the front walls of homes. Temporary structures are also raised for this purpose. The paintings are of a sketchy nature, with bright flat colours and bold lines. Nevertheless, in the hands of expert painters like Hari Panda[50] of Purushottamapur and Prakasa Mahapatra of Paralakhemandi, Osakothi paintings excel in their creative renderings with projection of delicate brush work. The best specimens of Hari Panda's paintings are preserved in the Osakothi shrine at Phanibandha in the district of Ganjam. Depending on traditional painter and non-traditional painter's stylistic variations, the Osakothi paintings have two thematic formats[51]. The ones done by the *Chitrakaras* give prominence to the dancing Shiva (Shiva *tandava*) in the centre, while the other projects Mangala. The repertoire of Osakothi paintings is wide and it includes various deities with the purpose of projecting the *tetisikoti* or the concept of thirty-three millions Gods and Goddesses.

The *Chitrakara jajamani* system in the painting traditions still thrives in which the patron and the painter interact. For festive occasions like consecration of newly built houses, marriage and thread ceremonies, the *chitrakaras* are commissioned to paint the entrance walls of the houses. Like Osakothi paintings, these are rough and sketchy, but, nevertheless, maintain an aesthetic continuity. South Odisha ritual murals have a distinct format which is horizontal like that of a palm-leaf composition. The emphasis is on the theme of Rama,[52] who is mostly

identified with the groom, or the boy receiving the sacred threads. The cult of Rama, which is popular in the district of Ganjam, and down south in Andhra Pradesh, has obviously influenced the thematic concept of marriage and thread ceremony paintings. The consecration paintings distinctly differ in concept which centre around the theme of Durga Madhava.[53] In Durga Madhava painting, the images of Mahisamardini Durga and Jagannatha are shown side by side as couples. These are done on the walls, and also on wooden boards pasted with cloth to be used in the ritual. Durga Madhava painting, resembles the Konarka stone relief panel discussed above, is a key motif in the kingship theory still practised in south Odisha traditions.

We have discovered a glaring example of the continuing hereditary tradition in mural painting in south Orissa, in the town of Jayapur.[54] The *chitrakara* families are in possession of old paintings and sketch books belonging to their ancestors, whom they follow in theme and style. These sketches contain the overall plan of compositions for mural paintings, showing placement of various figures. The ones we have produced are scrolls with double tiers of compositions, depicting the story about Vrindavati. These have thematic and stylistic resemblances to the sculptural and mural friezes of Dharakote Jagannatha Temple.

Wooden Pavilions

In south Odishan villages, one often comes across wooden pavilions standing as independent architectural setups or parts of temple complexes has a unique attached to tradition of wooden architecture[55]. The most elaborately carved wooden pavilions are attached to Viranchinarayana Temple in Buguda and Shiva



Carved wooden ceiling, Viranchinarayana Temple, Buguda

temple in Purushottamapur, both in the district of Ganjam, and at Jagannatha Temple, Navarangpur, in the district of Koraput. The wooden facade of the Ramaswamy Temple in Netanga near Bhanjanagar town is unique for its intricate design. This temple has a few loose sculptures which are also important for stylistic consideration of south Odisha traditions. In domestic and religious structures exquisitely carved wooden doors and architectural pieces such as pillars, capitals, brackets, and tympanums are common features in south Odisha56. The traditional houses dating back to a hundred or more years old in the towns of Buguda, Belaguntha, Bhanjanagara, Pitala, Digapahandi, Mundamarai and Chikitigada, are examples of excellent woodwork. The palaces of the kings in Ganjam *zamindaris* display ample use of woodwork. Wooden fragments in the palace ruins at Digapahandi show intricate scroll work on lotus medallions and creeper motifs.[57] The entrance doors to temples and *mathas* are carved with *dasavatara* and Krishnalila motifs. The best examples are the doors of the Jagannatha Temple at Belaguntha, Gopinatha *matha*, Bisamagiri, Jagannatha and Nursimha temples in Berhampur town. Besides, we also have various deities carved in wood, especially Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra, Nursimha, and Radhakrishna in various temples of south Odisha.

Applique craft, practiced rarely in south Odisha, nevertheless has a lively tradition. The huge effigies of horses, bulls and Navagunjara, which are brought out in processions on the occasion of temple rituals, speak of the onetime glory of the cloth patchwork of this region[58].

Ganjapa Playing cards

Painting of circular playing cards, ganjapa, and their use as a favourite aristocratic pastime, still exist in the district of Ganjam[59]. Ganjapa is known as *sara* (card) in this area. Besides, Atharangi and Dasavatara ganjapas are also painted in Puri and Raghurajpur. The Ashtamalla cards, Ramapattabhiseka cards and Bandha cards are peculiar to Chikitigada. Similarly, the Chadheisara and Tika cards are specially painted at Paralakhemandi. Cards are also painted at Digapahandi, Berhampur, Dharakote and Seragada.



Ganjapa

Illustrated Palm-leaf Manuscripts

A large number of illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts have been collected from the district of Ganjam. This speaks of a glorious tradition in palm-leaf illustrations. A few of these bear colophons, clearly identifying their provenance to the district while others have discernible south Odishan features. The most prolific palm-leaf scribe and illustrator of south Odisha is Raghunatha Prusty[60], an inhabitant of the Mundamarai Pentha, near the town of Dharakote. About nine

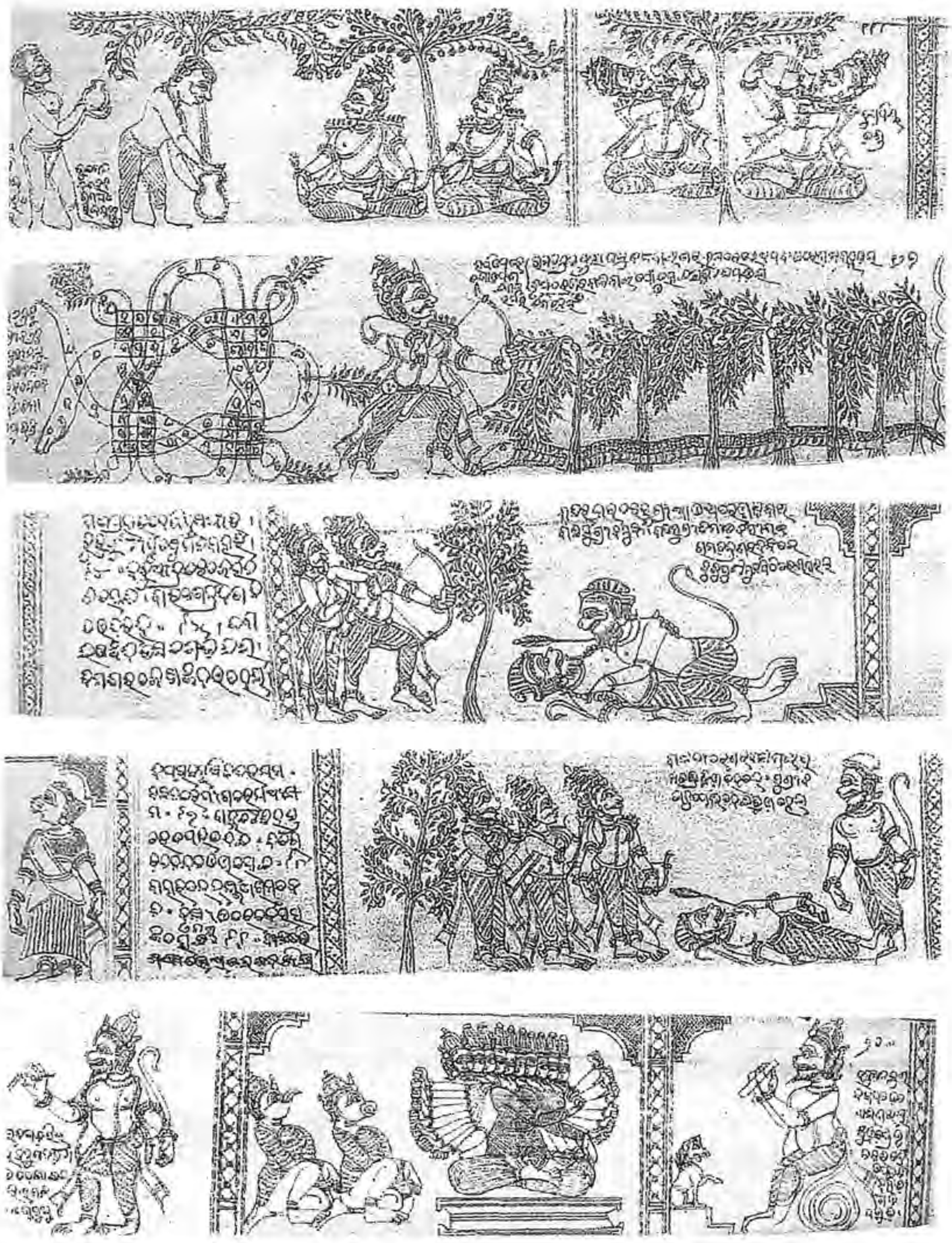


Radha Krishna keli, palm-leaf painting, 19th century, courtesy, Gyana Prabha, Varanasi

illustrated manuscripts have been ascribed to him. It is most probable that he might have a few more manuscripts illustrated by him, yet to be identified. The most elaborately and richly illustrated manuscript of *Lavanyavati* of the poet Upendra Bhanja is in the possession of Abeya Subuddhi, in the village of Mundamarai[61]. A few leafs in the Alice Boner collection at Zurich, Switzerland are very much nearer to the Abeya Subuddhi collection[62]. Besides *Lavanyavati,*a number of the poetic creations of Upendra Bhanja have been rendered with illustrations. These are *Vaidehisa Vilasa, Rasika Haravali*[63] and *Chitrakavya Bandhodaya,* A number of illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts from south Odisha are in the Odisha State Museum, and in other private collections. A few *Krishna kavyas* have also been traced in Paralakhemandi[64]. The colophons of *Bhagavati Janama, Sobhavati* and the *Jagannatha Thiabadhia* clearly indicate the names of the writers and illustrators. They come from Chasanimakhandi near Digapahandi



Radha and Krishna, Gitagovinda, palm-leaf painting, Museum Rietberg, Zurich
(Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 2000)



Ramayana paintings on palm-leaf, artist Michha Pattajoshi
(Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1978)

and Balinga sasana, near Khallikote in Ganjam district. Most surprisingly, an illustrated *Amarushataka* has been discovered in Odisha which seems rare. This is the work of Sharanakula master not very far from Buguda, clearly features south Odishan style in its depiction.

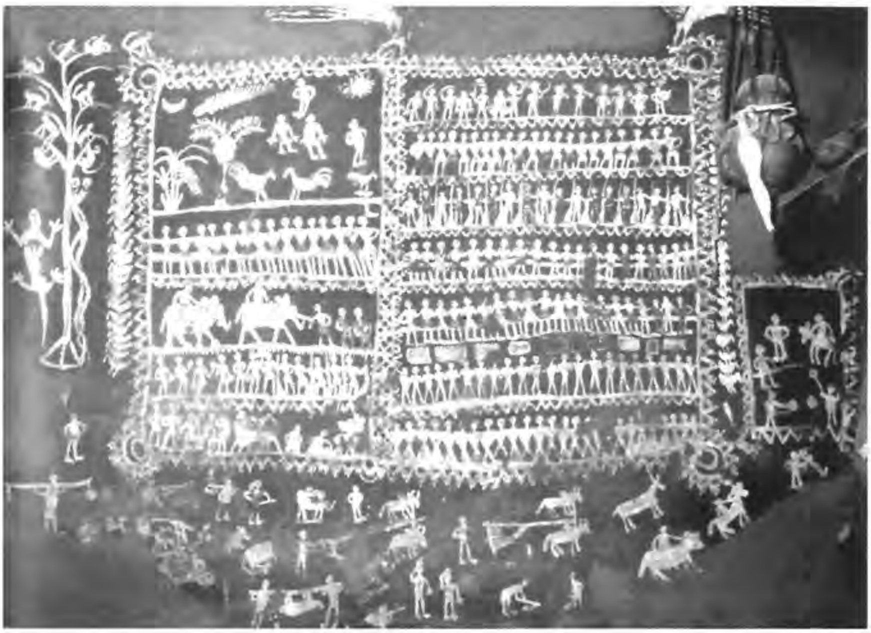
Textiles

The lacdye-resistant silk weaving is found only in the town of Berhampur[65]. This is locally known as *jaupata.* Besides, bright pinks and greens, violet coloured Berhampuri *pata* silks are very popular textile used by people all over Odisha. These are woven by a section of Telugu-speaking weavers called *deras,* who have been brought to Berhampur from Rajamundry by the Raja of Mahuri, to weave for the palace weddings. The common plain weaving is also done in Padmanabhapur, Kavisuryanagar (Boirani), Pitala, Hinjilicut. The sari woven at Kavisuryanagar has



Kondha girls wearing hand woven and embroidered shawls





Mural in a Kondha shrine (Photo: Cornelia Mallebrein)
Mural in a Saura house (Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1992)

found a place of pride in the rituals of the Jagannatha Temple at Puri. This sari is known as *Boirani* sari[66]. Bomakei, a village close to Chikiti, is famous for its typical brocade weaving. In the use of motifs on the border, and achal, these are closer to the tribal designs of Sauras and Kondhas[67]. The main stretch of sari, displays bright permanant colours of pink, vermillion, green and blue.

Tribal Paintings

The tribals such as the Sauras, Kondhas, Bondas and Gadbas, who live on hilly areas, have made their own distinctive contribution to the craft traditions of this region. The idea of creativity is best preserved in the wall painting of the Sauras which are known as *ittals*[68]. These paintings are executed in honour of the ghost spirit, in way of appeasement. The paintings are also symbols of family welfare, fertility and good harvest. Before making the paintings on the walls, the Saura painter actually dreams the sequences of the paintings the previous night. This counts for 'conceptualising a creative expression'. The theme of the painting comprises the ghost spirit in the centre, and the whole world of seen and unseen creatures around. In present times, although the theme of the painting has remained unchanged, the compositional structure has accommodated a lot of innovative ideas and motifs. These new motifs like automobiles, trains, aeroplanes, and bicycles have naturally been inspired from contemporary social situations[69].

Like the Saura paintings most of the tribal visual expressions are bound up with religious beliefs. The Kondha belief and fear in the dead spirit, identified with Bhimal, finds expression in the painted walls[70], doors and bins, as well as in tattooing. The Saura hair pin, brass armlets, wooden funerary pillars and sacrificial posts delicately carved Kutia Kondha bamboo tobacco tubes, brass hair pins, decorated door panels, and the mass of beaded ornaments worn by Bonda women are a few artistic achievements of the tribals of this region. The Kondha bronzes of this area excel in their primitive designing and innovative motifs. This tradition, however, has declined. The best specimens of Kondha bronzes are in the collections of the Department of Anthropology of the Utkal University at Bhubaneswar, and at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London[71]. Traditionally, the Bondas weave narrow strips of cloth with vertical multiple strips. The Gadba tribals weave Keranga saris. These saris can be distinguished by broad stripes of red, green and yellow.

Religion

In the areas of religion, the tribals have left indelible imprints of their traditions. The Sauras *(Savaras* in *Sanskrit)* have a close connection with the cult of Jagannatha, and their descendants *(daitapatis)* play an important role in the temple ritual of Lord Jagannatha, specifically during the period of *anasara, (anavasara)* and *navakalevara*[72]. Popular legends like Vidyapati and Lalita, connect the origin of Jagannatha to the Saura worship of stones, trees and wood. The Saura painting tradition of *ittal,* which is done to appease the ghost spirit, has far distant echos in the painting ritual of Jagannatha.

Worship of wooden posts in south Odisha is a tradition derived from the Kondha worship of wooden posts, which could have connections with the meriah sacrifice[73]. This worship has been institutionalized in the temple of Khambesvari at Aska. Wooden posts *(subha khamba, subha khunti)* are worshipped at the

beginning of Osakothi and Thakurani yatra rituals in villages. These rituals are connected with bloody sacrifices. Animal sacrifice was a ritualistic feature before the *Ishtadevi* inside the palaces of *zamindaras* in south Odisha. Before Hinduisation of the primitive religion, it seems that the *Ishtadevi* (in the form of a brass Durga image) was a tribal *martyr-ishtadevata*. It is for this reason that the Kondhas play a major role in the Devipuja worship of Goddess during *Dasahara* festivals observed inside the palaces[74]. The Kondhas were responsible for buffalo sacrifice as offering to *Istadevi,* which were reflections of their *meriah* sacrifice for a good harvest and for prosperity. Besides, the Kondhas had a dominant role in the kingship and the establishment of the *zamindaris* (kingdoms). There are several legends to prove that the *zamindaris* have derived their names from the tribal chiefs, who died martyrs[75]. The name of Dharakote is derived from the name of the Kondha chief Dhara Kondha. The name of another *zamindari* of Digapahandi is also derived from the names of two martyr Kondha chiefs, *Diga* and *Padia.* At the state level, the Kondha ritual of renewal of wooden posts has parallels in the Puri Navakalevara, although the renewal ritual of the Kondha is by far more simple[76].

Patronage and Ritual Function

Till recent past, the local kings extended patronage to the artisans within their territories. The palace and the temple provided the caste-based ritual service structure[77]. Almost all the caste-centred ritual services performed in the temple of Lord Jagannatha at Puri were replicated in the palace of the local kings. Each system of services has its own pattern of proliferation and development although basically the same castes people renders more or less similar secular and ritual services in the temple, as well as in the palace. There was a temple community in each principality of south Odisha. The social structure in a traditional *zamindari* capital town provides for a functional multicaste system[78]. At the centre of the town plan is the palace of the king or *zamindar,* with the temple of Jagannatha inside (like in Digapahandi), or close by (like in Dharakote or Khallikote). There is a main street for the chariots of Lord Jagannatha to be pulled in procession during the car festival known as *badadanda*, which formed the main axis for the town planning[79]. There are several other streets assigned to Brahmins *(panda, pujari, purohita, suars)*, courtiers *(kayastha, karana)*, soldiers *(paika, khandayata)*, farmers *(chasa pradhana, odia)*, painters, masons/carpenters


Gajapati Raja of Paralakhemandi during the local car festival

(mahapatra, maharana), goldsmiths *(sunari),* applique workers, tailors *(sipitli),* milkmen, pipe blowers *(gauda, bharua and kahalia),* barbers *(bhandari).* washermen *(dhobi),* etc. Special areas have also been assigned to blacksmiths *(kamara),* prostitutes and temple dancers *(dari, guni).* Besides potters, untouchables such as cobblers and scavengers have also been allotted places, at a short distance from the village. Each *zamindari* capital town (gada) has a business centre known as *pentha.* The *Digapahandi gada* has its Padmanabhapur pentha, Chikitigada has its Chikiti pentha and Dharakote *gada* has its Mundamarai pentha.

The palace is generally situated at the foot of a hill[80]. At times its three sides are protected by hills, which provide a wall of defense. The best examples are Dharakote, Chikitigada and Khallikote. The palace/temple (Jagannatha) is the centre of attraction. The king has his family goddess inside the palace, which has ritualistic connections with the tribal community[81]. For religious sanction and also to gain the support of the tribal community, the king, visits the original shrine of the tribal Goddess on the top of a hill, or deep in the forest[82]. The tribal Goddess gradually is Hinduised, and ultimately transformed into iconic Durga. At times, streets are named after the tribal Gods and Goddesses in the town settlements. There is a street named after Kothari of the king who was also the family Goddess of Dharakondha, who relinquished the rights of his kingdom to the king of Dharakote on condition that his family Goddess should be recognised by the king.

Distinctive South Odishan Style

The art, architecture, customs, manners and the culture of south Odisha bear unmistakable traces of south India, and particularly of Andhra influences[83]. The Odia spoken by south Odisha people has southern intonations, which can be clearly differentiated from the Odia of the rest of the state. The angularity in treatment of the human figures and the depiction of the women with long plaits with hanging tassels are quite common in the painting of this region. So also is the use of *dandi* (nose pendant), *ghagara* type of skirt worn by the cowherd women in the *Krishnalila* paintings, or the presence of the *gopuram* in the temple architecture. These are a few instances of Telugu influences on the art of south Odisha[84]. The art of south Odisha is also influenced by the Marathas, the Deccani Sulatans, and the British. The Maratha influence can be seen in veiled women and turbaned courtiers. The varieties of turbans displayed in *Rasika Haravali* illustrations are the best examples to the hierarchical status in the court life[85]. The presence of stitched and striped costumes owes its origin to the Sultanate and Mughal influences[86]. We often find such dresses in palm-leaf illustrations of *Lavanyavati* and wall paintings of Dharakote Jagannatha Temple. It is quite interesting to note that the demonic characters such as Ravana, Hiranyakasipu and Bana, as well as other menials in the court have been given these stitched costumes, denoting their low status in the Hindu society of that time[87].

The British influence is a major phenomenon in south Odisha[88]. For nearly two hundred years, this area remained under the direct control of the British administration. Therefore, in their costumes and manners, they showed an inclination to western styles. Almost all the palaces of the kings in south Odisha were built in the British architectural style, with Roman arches, pillars and with ornate brackets in an overall decadent baroque fashion[89]. These local kings imported furniture and glass wares from Europe. On their palace walls are hung large oil portraits of family member painted at Madras by native artists in the British style[90]. Crude marble statues adorned their courtyards and gardens. This slavish imitation was also depicted in the traditional wall paintings and sculptures of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

In spite of several alien influences on its art, architecture, painting, crafts and cultural life, south Odisha is rich in traditional heritage compared to the rest of the state. It vibrates with regional flavour, charm and ingenuity of its art style. Barring a few large industries, south Odisha is comparatively an agriculturally predominant area, with a rural economy, promoting a traditional lifestyle and a traditional outlook. The mural paintings of south Odisha have not been adequately promoted. None of the painted temples or *mathas* are protected either by the Government of India, or by the State Government. The intensity of the ritualistic practices have been slowed down, and the number of temple servitours reduced to the bare minimum. This has created an attitude of neglect. Therefore, neither is the one time patron, the *Raja,* serious towards the preservation of the monument and the traditions, nor are the villagers, who use the temple are in a position to understand the value of the institutions in order to protect them from decay. Therefore, the only course left is to document it for posterity.



Basua balada Bullack dance



Hiranya Kashipu

Prahallada Nataka

A Lyrical Theatre with Contemporary Art and Literary Linguistics

Dinanath Pathy

The discussion is based on Shantanu Kumar Rath's thesis- *Odia Lokanatya Parampara O Prahallada Nataka*, 2002, Odisha Book Store, Cuttack. The book is of 236 pages and divided into five chapters. The author tries to define *lokanata* (or people's theatre) by quoting from Bharata and several other sources. He specifically hints at two characters; the *Vidushaka* (Jester) and the *Sutradhara* (narrator) which could be treated as integral of folk theatre. But he informs us that these two characters are part of Sanskrit plays and their presence in traditional plays is attributed to Sanskritic traditions. Shantanu Rath tries to consider several

other plays those exist in various regions of India such as Kuttiyatam of Kerala, Yakshagana of Karnataka, Andhra and Tamilnadu and Bhagavatamela Nataka of the south as regional, traditional and folk. He seems not very much convinced of the difference between the regional, folk and traditional but does not come out with a definite definition of *lokanataka* or *lokanata* as a kind of premise. He quotes Kapila Vatsyayan, who also seems not very particular of these terms. "In purely anthropological terms, levels naturally are tribal. In artistic terminology they are sometimes called folk-which imply community and mean expressions that are participative and spontaneous-sometimes classical, indicating highly textual forms. Although never explicitly stated, folk is correlated to tribal, village and group community and classical to the urban sophisticated-whether industrial or not (quoted in Rath, pp.14-15).


Prahallada

Kapila Vatsyayan's observation has no specific bearing on defining Prahallada Nataka as 'folk'. The gray areas in these statements are intriguing and end up not 'either', 'or' but 'both' and with contribute to the confusing scenario which has kept on changing with time and emergence of new modes of perception. To fall back upon Bharat's *Natya Shastra* does not always add credentials to our search for defining a regional theatre form like Prahallada Nataka which emerged in a Telugu infested track of Odisha that was part of Madras Presidency before being formed into a separate state in the year 1936.

Experts are reluctant to equate regional theatre with folk plays. They believe that the regional theatres are more precise, refined and ornate. In several cases they follow the tradition. Therefore we have a wide range of plays such as Lila, Ankia nata, Jatra, Bhagavata Mela and Suanga. These forms have emerged at a time when the performance of Sanskrit plays declined (Rath, pp.6-7).

The author says, that the 'folk plays in India have a long history and these have 'village' as the targeted audience. As parallel to this practice, in western world these are plays termed as 'folk' or 'folk-drama'. The author Dr. Rath wavers between confusing or ambiguous definitions of tribal, folk, urban, traditional and regional. In an attempt to qualify his presumptions of *lokadharmi*, he has drawn our attention to a few vital issues concerning the Prahallada Nataka performance.

These are (a) spectators' spontaneous interventional participation in the proceedings of the play (b) treating the entire village as the theatre arena (c) spilling over the written text when need arises, (d) dialoguing that happens between the *Vidushaka* and the audience and (e) the technique of freezing the characters. These aspects are now considered contemporary of an environmental play and should not be linked with its folk characteristics.

John Emigh, Professor of Theatre, Bowning University, USA is particularly appreciative of the open air stage for the theatre. He says, "it is exciting to see the village itself becoming the scene of performance as opposed to setting of a separate house which is a part of Indian tradition. He enjoys the noise, the way people sleep, wander, people do everything that people do. He further adds that there is an excitement about the fact that the theatre is right there as a continuing part of the village life and people staying upon night to see it (Rath, pp, 233-236).

I am intrigued the way the theatre critics of Odisha use the categories of 'folk' and 'classical'. I am not convinced that the Prahallada Nataka could be a folk play (*lokadharmi nataka*). This undermines its pronounced textual and musical character. It has a powerful and systematised structure, it draws profoundly from puranic and Sanskritic traditions as well as Carnatic music traditions which is called a classical tradition. John Emigh rightly remarks that there is barely anything called a pure classical tradition that doesn't interact with the tradition of the village and draws from the traditions of the village and gives back to them (Rath, p.234)

Shantanu Rath has put forward three basic postulations concerning Prahallada Nataka. These are (1) the religion, more specifically the tradition of Nrusimha worship in the south including the south Odisha region with Simhachalam as the major centre (2) the importance of regional language, more importantedly the local dialects with a mixture of Telugu and Urdu and (3) the tradition of music, the main centre being Paralakhemandi.

As for as the Nrusimha worship is concerned, I am instantly reminded of a group of street dancers carrying in a wooden tray, a brass image of Nrusimha and speaking a mixed dialect of southern Odia and Telugu. They moved from village to village as a group of street dancers displaying their skills in fire-play, even rolling fire torch over their bare chests. I have seen several of them visiting my native village Digapahandi in the 50s of the 20th century. The author Rath mentions about this impressive street performance in his book (Rath, p.35) but briefly. He mentions the names of the villages such as Jarada, Surangi, Chikiti, Patrapur which he is aware of. But the list of villages could be much more. I am in know of several such groups who comprising a decorated bullock and inferno show men who used a *Yamapati* to demonstrate horrors of hell and virtues of heaven (Eberhard Fischer, Sitakant Mahapatra and Dinanath Pathy, Ed. *Orissa Kunst und Kulture*, 1980). To popularise the cult, all these groups travelled from Andhra Pradesh and were sighted in the towns of Jayapur, Rayagada, Paralakhemandi and Digapahandi. The use of Nrusimha



Nrusimha tearing open Hiranya Kashipu, acrylic painting on canvas by Dinanath Pathy for the exhibition, I am from Ganjam, So are the Images, 2015

mask as a very significant theatre property and the appearance of Nrusimha heralding the climax of the theatre are two important factors in the Prahallada Nataka. The fire-play of the street performers are linked to the belief of the priests of Simhachalam who profess that when the sandal paste layers over the face of the Nrusimha image are removed, fire leaps out from the eyes of the image. Moreover the temple of Nrusimha situated on a hill top has co.-relations with the episode of punishment meted out to Prahallada like throwing him from a hilltop. The several painted scenes of torture of the hell painted on the *Yamapati* and demonstrated by the inferno show man has distant echoes in the scenes of punishment which are enacted in the Prahallada Nataka.

Worship of Nrusimha has assumed importance of a cult and was reflected in literary creations and way of life of common people and the royalty. *Odia Mahabharata* of Sarala Dasa, (*Bhisma Parva*), *Harivamsa* of Bipra Narayana

Dasa, *Odia Bhagavata* (*Prahallada Charita*, Tenth chapter) of Jagannatha Dasa, *Vishnukeshari Purana* of Mahadeva Dasa (17th Century), Nrusimha Purana of Bipra Pitamvara Dasa, *Vichitra Nrusimha Purana* of Dasarathi Mishra and *Nrusimha Mahatmya* of Yogi Dasa are a few notable works dealing with Nrusimha theme. The author Rath also observes that out of the literary outputs on Nrusimha, most of the works belong to authors from Ganjam district.

Although the episode of Nrusimha has emerged from the *Mahabharata*, it has evolved into a story line in *Harivamsa-*, *Brahma-, Vishnu-, Dharmottara-*, *Padma-* and *Matsya Puranas*. Finally the crux of the episode as Hiranyakasipu-Prahallada has appeared in *Vishnu Purana* and in *Bhagavata* and *Nrusimha Purana*. It has later matured in a more concrete from as *Hiranyakasipu-Nrusimha-Prahallada* (Ratha, pp.35-40).

The religious idea mirrored in the worship of Nrusimha finds manifested in *kavya*, *purana*; in sculpture, painting and other artifacts. And these put together led to the enactment of a theatre called Prahallada Nataka which has been composed by Ramakrushna Chhotray, the king of Jalàntara, a small principality now in Andhra Pradesh with the help of his court poet Gourahari Parichha.

In the Prahallada Nataka, Nrusmiha appears at the end of the play, the character wearing a huge mask remains hidden in an improvised pillar. When Hiranya hits at the pillar, the pillar splits and Nrusimha emerges controlled by a group of organizers who hold him back and controls his furry with the help of a long rope tied around his waist, lest he may in a fit of trance kill Hiranya. A story is doing the round among the theatre fraternity, how Nrusimha in a fit of rage killed his traditional enemy on the stage.

Mask is the significant property of the theatre group. This remains under worship round the year in the theatre practice hall (*akhada*) of the village, face covered. However, it receives daily offerings It is only taken out during the performance and the person who wears it observes all kinds of ritualistic purity. The mask believed to represent the God Nrusimha has immense divine power. The power is transmitted to the person who dons it (Rath, p.100). On the other hand my brother Lokanath Pathy who was associated with several Prahallada Nataka groups as a prop-artist had narrated to me a funny incident in which the person who did put on the Nrusimha mark died of several poisonous scorpion stings which constantly hit at his face. These scorpions were living in the cavity of the mask for months unnoticed by the priests who offered worship round the year.

The mask about three and a half or four feet high is fashioned out of light wood (*paladhua*) and finished with sawdust mixed with tamarind glue and paper pulp. Layers of cloth are pasted over it and then given to paint. There is a halo around the face of the lion which serves as the mane. The bottom portions of the eyes are silt and the person who wears the mask can peep through it. Peter Brook, the renowned director, said in a recent interview that putting on a mask imparts the

"most extraordinary sense of liberation. According to him, when a mask is put on, "it is a great moment to suddenly find result immediately for a certain time liberated from ones own subjectivity. And the awakening of a body awareness is immediately there with it. "He also believes "The traditional mask in essence is not a mask at all, because it is an image of the essential nature. In other worlds, a traditional mask is a portrait of a man without a mask" (Jiwan Pani quoted by Rath, p.123)

The Charukala Mandir (Temple of Fine Arts) in Digapahandi in seventies of the 20th Century ran a workshop for Prahallada Nataka theatre groups. My brother was the chief artists and I have assisted my brother during my school days as a junior artist. The workshop produced Nrusimha masks, Ganesa masks, head gears (*kiriti*), arm wings (*bhuja kiriti*) and decorated wrist bands (*dastana*) for Hiranya and Prahallada and waist bands (*antapatia*) for Lilavati. (Pathy, *The Drawing Master of Digapahandi*, p.39) This workshop has introduced several innovation. These are (a) use of painted theatre curtains, (b) dream sequences using mosquito nets and blue lights (c) projection of slides through a Magic Lantern on the ten incarnations of Vishnu and the castings of the theatre (d) a large mouse in papier mache and a wheeled cart for Ganesa to ride and enter the arena. These innovations helped a theatre group to win over the opponent and the workshop's role was always a deciding factor.



Prahallada Nataka performance, Prahallada and Nrusimha (Photo: John Emigh)

John Emigh, who has done extensive research on Prahallada Nataka has traced a link to the Nrusimha performance in Southeast Asia based on the use of mask in both the cases.

The use of local dialects in the theatre in the written text as well as in the impromptu dialogues exchanged between the minor characters, such as minister, Chandamarka, *rishi*, Betrahasta, *asura*, *rakshasa*, Gajakarna, *mahunta*, snake charmer, *dasi* (maid) *dhai* (mid-wife) is crucial for the progress of the story and to locate it in a particular region. The peculiarity of the use of a mixed language by the characters in the play is meant for characters drawn from different levels of the society. In spite of this, it is complained that the language used in the play is complex, idiomatic, at times incomprehensible, and hard (Bhagaban Panda quoted in Rath, p.105). But the allegation doesn't seem tenable as because the playwright in most cases have used nonsense verses to arouse curiosity in the spectators. Since the district of Ganjam was a part of the Madras Presidency, its inhabitants were conversant to a kind of mixed language formed with Odia, Sanskrit, Telugu, Urdu, Parsi, Bengali and Hindi. Such a language is difficult to be translated into English and when it is done, it loses it mysterious character and sound value.

The language used in the Prahallada Nataka awaits proper research which has not yet been done. The medieval Odia language has traversed a long distance to imbibe the dialogic versions of the common man leaving behind the sanskritic tradition and *lila* tradition. Such recognition to the spoken language has created interest in the theatre and their patronage kept the tradition going.

The third postulation of Shantanu Rath is the music of the theatre. At the outset let us be clear of the basic character of the play which is based on musicality. Along with the occasional use of dialogue, music and rhythm play a significant part. Music consists of both Hindustani and Carnatic. Paralakhemandi in undivided Ganjam district was the centre of music which patronaged a host of talented musician from the south. This paved the way for the royal courts of Tarala, Jalantara, Manjusha to sway in the prevailing mood. Both the forms of classified Hidusthani and Carnatic music amalgamated to create a new genre of singing. Though outwardly it appeared as Carnataki, yet it was the local music with a distinct note. In this connection the comment offered by Jiwan Pani seems justified. "The *chhanda* tradition of Odisha is another fascinating and distinctive aspect of Odissi music. Since the song sung in Prahallada Nataka are often in *chhanda* pattern, it is necessary to discuss it here briefly. The major poetic works in Odia, written in the sixteenth century and Hisdustani systems of music of the time, has a distinctive character of its own. (Jiwan Pani quoted by Rath, p. 133)

One finds the use of seven kinds of *tala* in the theatre. These are Ashtatala, Attatala, Athatali, Adi, Ekatala, Rupaka and Jhula. Since the list is based on an incomplete manuscript of Prahallada Nataka, it is expected that a complete manuscript would have more number of *talas*. The character who acts in the role of Hiranya is normally a singer of eminence and is aware of the *tala* and rhythm of songs. The professional singer (*gayaka*) and the *mardala* player (*bayaka*) are

equally proficient in *tala* and rhythm of songs. It is extremely enjoyable to watch Hiranya and the *mardala* player at times throw challenges at each other and show off their erudition and try to down play one another. When they collate and complement each other, that is also fascinating. The *mardala* player first strikes a *tala* to give chance to Hiranya to follow and the virile Hiranya follows the beats of *mardala* and starts dancing.

There are thirty five *ragas* to which the songs of Prahallada Nataka adhere to. Most of these *ragas* are Carnatic. These are Pantuvaradi, Kamodi, Jhinjhoti, Mukhari, Desh, Marua, Hindustani Todi, Navaroj, Nadanamakriya, Saveri, Shankarabharana, Ashavari, Arabhi, Ahari, Todi-Punnaga, Nata, Bairavi, Khamacha, Puriakalyana, Kalyani, Deshiyakhamacha, Behaga, Regupta, Arupa, Deshiya Todi, Sri, Sahana, Ghantarva, Shrota and Kedara Gouda. (Rath p. 134)

The performing groups do not follow the prescription of seven *talas* and 35 *ragas*. They invariably follow their own conveniences. The *gurus* have no systematic training in music, neither they are educated enough to impart sound knowledge to their disciples. They don't lay emphasis on the correctness of musical codes and grammar. They have root memory which results from constant practice, therefore it may not be possible to classify the music they sing as classical music.



Nrusimha tearing open Hiranyakasipu, mural painting, Jagannatha Temple, Dharakote, 19th century (Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1986)

Svara, aroha and *avaroha*, ascending and descending order do not confirm to an accepted standard. But this doesn't undermine the quality of songs, its *raga* and *tala*. On the contrary some bonafied institute like the Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, or even the Odissi Research Institutes should earnestly take up cleansing the deficiencies. But it seems a remote possibility.

The author of the Prahallada Nataka, Gourahari Parichha was an eminent singer of his time. He had deep knowledge in both Hindustani and Carnatic systems of music. He was well versed in playing more than one musical instruments.

Mukhavina or *mahuri* is the main musical instrument followed by *mardala*, harmonium and cymbals, both of small and large sizes. Music is the soul of Prahallada Nataka. The comments of Jiwan Pani is quite relevant. "Music is the life-breath of Prahallada Nataka. It not only provides the base but also determines the dramatic structure. Both vocal and instrumental is used at appropriate places to intensify the dramatic effect. The percussion music helps the *abhinaya* to acquire a choreographic character. Dialogues winged with music take the emotive interest farther than realistic delivery. Complex emotions which cannot be verbalised are adequately and admirably communicated through music." (Jiwan Pani quoted in Rath, p.137)

It is difficult to estimate the classical character of music from the present day music performers of the *raja* characters (Hiranya) and the *gayaks* of the theatre. The brilliance that was once the hallmark of the theatre has now on the downslide. But in the earlier format there was erudite display of knowledge quoting from *Sangita* treatises. One should not forget that the *Sangita Narayana* was composed in Paralakhemandi.

We are inclined to quote two *slokas* often sung in the Prahallada Nataka performances.

"Kalamargakriyangani grahajati kalalayah
Jyoti prastarakascheti talapranah dasamakah.
Dhuvamscha rupakascha jhampa triputamevacha
Astataleikatalascha saptatalaha prakirtitaha."

This above quote enumerates characters of a few *ragas* and *talas*:
Let us examine characteristics of another *raga:*

"Srikhanda saila sikhare sikhivara bhasitam
Matanga muktamiva krutahara vesti.
Ha Krushna chandana taru svarupa bhangima
Vardhata valaya ujjvala nila kanti
saveri raga kathitam vidagdheih."

This *sloka* which defines Saveri raga and is loosely translated as follows:

A peacock wearing a necklace of pearls is seated on the top of a hill and is displaying its tail contoured with blue-sandal paste. It gets excited and raises its tail and produces a sound which is called Saveri raga. Such descriptive example of a *raga* is found rarer in other theatrical texts of the time. Even in the available manuscripts of Prahallada Nataka one does not come across such a beautiful description of a *raga*. It seems such a *sloka* has been added later to the performance by some imaginative singer. In spite of such classical musical affiliations it may not be proper to degrade the classical status of the play and label it as *lokadharmi nataka* simply because it is sustained by folk groups in the districts of Ganjam and Gajapati.

Besides the above three basic postulations of religion, literature and music, the other important feature of the play is *aharya*, including the stage properties. A closer look at the dress and accomplishment reveals that the Prahallada Nataka has imitated the *Prahallada Charitam* of Melattur of Andhra Pradesh. The author of the book Shantanu Kumar Rath, though admirably could advance reasonable logic to prove that the text of the play has an independent standing, but has not been able to completely extricate it from the Telugu influences on dress and make up of main characters. Man wearing *ghagaras* was considered a stately fashion in Maratha courts. It was also a military costume. Kapila Vatsyayan (*Traditional Indian Theatre*, p. 62) is also of the view that the wearing style could be traced to the Maratha courts. The layered *ghagaras* were quite common for male characters in Bhagavatamela Nataka, Kathakali and Yakshagana. *Ghagara* style has influenced the characters in Pala (Dhiren Dash quoted by Rath, p. 117)

To make Hiranya look vigorous and demonic, he is dressed like characters in Kathakali. Kathakali also lays emphasis on the use of an improvised beard called *chutti* which transforms the characters into a different ethereal level. "Blazing red and deep black, shot with a dash of white are employed with great skill to affect a change that is truly astounding. Generally this type represents vicious and vile characters and power intoxicated beings like Dusasana and Bakasura. The red beard's glances are invariably furious and his gestures are emphatic, aggressive and haunting. His dances are tempestuous and earthshaking (K. Bharath Iyer quoted by Rath, p. 117)

Hiranya is the main focus of the play and therefore emphasis is given to dress him elaborately. He puts on a *chudidar* and ties thick cotton strips on his legs to add extra strength to his muscles. Over this he wears a seven layered *ghagara* which provides a psychedelic effect when he spins and turns while acting. Vermilion power is made into a paste with a mix of ghee and is applied on Hiranya's face. For his mustaches he uses a thick wick laced with silver *zari* strips that runs over both the checks and fixed to the head gear. A tuff of bear-fur serves as the beard

A tuff of the same material hangs over his back to add visual support to the neck. A *kirita* (*kirati*) fashioned like a miniature *sikhara* shrine and worked with velvet cloth pieces, *zari, zambura*, beads is placed on Hiranya's head which bestows a commanding status to the character. In addition to this, he ties two wings (*baju kirati*) on his upper arms and decorates his writsts with bands having petal like formations called *dastana*. Prahallada is also decked in a similar fashion like that of his father Hiranya. But he leaves his face natural only with touches of pink powder which lends a feminine look. The nose pendant *dandi* that Prahallada wears is in imitation of the Krishna character of Krishnalila. Although born to a demonic character, Prahallada is grouped along with other divinities and therefore is given a sombre disposition.

In the palm-leaf paintings of Odisha, the demonic characters are always depicted in stitched and stripped garments. They are made to wear tight *paijama*s



Lilavati and Hiranya in Prahallada Nataka, Ganjam district

and long tunics with *kirita* and waist bands. They often appear bearded, use of *ghagara* was not that frequent. Unfortunately, the palm-leaf manuscript of Prahallada Nataka preserved in the Berhampur University library has no illustrations. It could be possible that by the time the *pothi* was written, the tradition of illuminating the *pothis* had been given up although we get a few 20th century illustrated *pothis* from Ganjam area. But there are several pictorial samples of demonic charactors such as Bana (Banasura) in the 18th century *Usharana pothi* and Mahisasura in a *Shakta pothi* (Ref.. *Orissa kunst und kultur in Nordost Indien* Eberhard Fischer, Sitakant Mahapatra, Dinanath Pathy p.250 and Dinanath Pathy *Essence of Orissan Painting*, pp. 94 and 106).

The visual aspects of the theatre have not been discussed adquetly. For an adequate analyses of the drama, its visual impact on the audience is of paramount importance. Flashes of red, black and rainbow colour effects of the *ghagaras* with star like twiklings of the headgear have added optical illusion to the performance. This illusion is not static but quite dynamic and made to move and flow up and down and from length to breadth transporting the spectators to a kind of imaginary realm. The impact of strong elemental colours added with beats of *mardala* and delivery of songs leave an unforgettable blaze in the minds of spectators.

Lika Radhapremalila, Prahallada Nataka was initially a court art at a time when the influence of court on the public was waning. Thanks to the artistic minded enlightened people of Ganjam who finally took it up and sustained it for more than a hundred years. Let us not shy away from the fact that Prahallada Nataka is a modern people's theatre of the Madras Presidency composed by a great Odia, Gourahari Parichha and patronaged by an equally great royal personality



Prahallada in Prahallada Nataka, Ganjam district

like Ramakrishna Chhotaray. I fully agree with Shantanu Rath, that it is an Odia play and not copied from Telugu. But while doing so, at the back of my mind, I am reminded of the prevailing early 20 century southern culture and impact it made on southern Odisha. One should not be ashamed of accepting such influences rather take it along. In the world of culture nothing is pure, singular and uninfluenced by similar cultures. It is not a culture but many a cultures which thrive together.

Now it is the time to tighten our belts and give a relook and rethinking to the theatrical form and make it presentable to a national and international audience. last year in February I had an occasion to accompany Shantanu Rath to Paralakhemandi to participate in a seminar on Prahallada Nataka. Three lengthy papers were presented. The presenters, all elderly and knowledgeable people quite enthusiastically were trying to prove certain points to their liking regarding Sangeeta Bhushana, Gourahari Parichha, Jalantara Ramakrishan Chhotaray and the role of Paralakhemandi. The presenters were in fighting spirits. When my turn came to speak I said that their three hours of paper reading could be summed up in eight to ten pages. I appealed to them that by talking alone, no theatre from could improve and survive. I gave them examples of the famous environmental plays like Dhanu Jatra of Bargarh in western Odisha.

Now the most important question for the proud people of Paralakhemandi to ponder over is can they not be able to organise a weeklong Prahallada Nataka Festival in their town involving the district administration, Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi and Odisha?

I thank Shantanu Rath who gave me a chance to relook at the theatre through his book which he gifted to me at Paralakhemandi.

Sakhinata

Dinanath Pathy



Sakhinata, the dance of sakhipilas, pre-puberty boys dressed as girls is a prominent dance style of eighteenth and nineteenth century Odisha.[1] It is largely musical, gestural, and acrobatic. It suffered ignominity in the last part of the twentieth century and was branded as erotic and voluptuous with corrupting southern influences. This undeserving remark served as a propaganda to marginalize the sakhinata. In the reconstruction of the neo-classical Odissi dance, the specific contribution of sakhinata was never taken into account with sanguinity while almost all the Odia poems sung and danced by sakhipilas (companion boys) were adopted by the founding fathers of the neo-classical Odissi along with *abhinaya* (expressional) numbers and specifically its *bandhas* or *hatas* (acrobatics). These influences were never acknowledged in public as the properties of sakhinata. The mindset that underminded the contribution of sakhinata emphasized a stern departure from all that had a tinge of southern *(dakshini)* because Bharatanatyam at that time was claiming to be the mother of all the southern dance forms and therefore Odissi reconstructors did their best not to accept Bharatanatyam's too ambitious designs. Unfortunately in this cross-cultural scenario, sakhinata lost its genuine claim.

Historically speaking, south Odisha was part of Madras Presidency till AD 1936 and it was but natural for sakhinata that acquired prominence in the nineteenth century to be influenced by *dakshini* what is now famously called as Kuchipudi and Vilasini Nrutya.[2] The precurssor of Kuchipudi was Bhagavata Mela Nata. This had a strong male dominance and only boys and young men constituted the Bhagavata-dance troupes. Kuchipudi in its earlier form stems from the village Kucheli, now in Andhra Pradesh. Most of the male members of the village are dancers. In principle, women were not allowed in dance groups for fear of sexual pollution.[3]Later, the importance of male in the role of female in relation to Krishna-*bhakti* influenced gotipua, a costal counterpart of sakhinata. As a result, the gotipua resorted to the devotional *rasa* dance of Gaudiya vaishnavas, All these dances such as the Bhagavata Mela Nata, early Kuchipudi, sakhinata, and gotipua were performed by boys.

Gotipua dance emerged to dominate coastal Odisha also in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with its nucleus in Puri town and adjacent villages. The dance basically reflected Gaudiaya vaishnava nuances and provided an alternative to sakhinata of south Odisha which was erogenous.[3] Modelled on the sakhinata repertoire and composed of *hatanata* (acrobatics) and *abhinaya* numbers, with *parija* (hand gesture), gotipua dance was required to project the devotional face of a sublimated state of *bhakti*. The idea that Krishna is the only male and all other males attending on him are females justified the sublimated feminine state of the boy dancers. As a result the vigorous dance postures like Krishna *tandava*, Durga *tandava*, and Shiva *tandava* were taken out of the repertoire and the angularities of the poses and postures were glossed over. The ruggedness and the primitive stances gotipua dancers inherited from the southern sakhinata groups were given up to accommodate an urban oriented suave dance which ultimately fitted into the Gaudiya vaishnava philosophy.



Sakhipilas of Berhampur town with their masters, Angarag Archives

With the growing support extended to gotipua dance, it spread to the neighbouring districts beyond Puri on the coastal belt as far as Balasore. Some historical documents are advanced in support of the origin of both the dance forms such as the sakhinata and the gotipua. Krushna Chandra Panigrahi (1960) are of the view that gotipua dance emerged in the sixteenth century during the time of Prataparudra Deva, But his view is contested by D.N. Patnaik (1971)[4] and Sunil Kothari (1990), who believed that Ramananda Ray was an advocate of *sakhi bhava* and he introduced the custom of the temple dance by boys dressed as girls and not by women as was the custom else-where particularly in south Indian temples. This form of dance should have been termed as sakhinata. The statements of authors about the origin and prevalence of boy dance are contradictory. Priyambada Mohanty Hejmadi (2007)[5] mentions that Gajapati Ramchandra Deva established Satasahi Akhada at Puri for physical exercises as well as for training in music and gotipua dance in the seventeenth century. In the same paragraph she further states that the gotipua dance system flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when they took to interpreting lyrics of vaishnava poets for *abhinaya*. If the gotipua dance as an alternative to sakhinata is accepted as a considered view, its emergence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may not be contradicted simply because it is a later date and fails to build an antiquarian myth about neo-classical Odissi.

The views expressed by Gopal Chandra Praharaj (1928),[6] the famous lexicographer about the emergence of gotipua are quite significant. Priyambada Mohanty (2007) hails his statement as the best document. Praharaj writes that



Sakhipilas singing at All India Radio, Berhampur, Angarag Archives

Kishore Chandrananda Champu (popularly called *Kishori Champu)* is well known throughout Odisha. The gotipua troupes who cannot sing the Kishori Champu in appropriate *raga ragini* and *with parija* are not liked by the public. Praharaj goes on elucidating that after the *chhanda* (a style of singing only in *thai* without any *antara)* period of Upendra Bhanja, Gopala Krushna. Banamali, and a few others composed Odissi music. At that time, Ganjam was in Madras Presidency and the music was influenced considerably by Telugu people from Andhra. Further, in music and dance performances the vulgar dance by prostitutes used to be prevalent. According to Praharaj, Odias created gotipua troupes as .an alternative to the dance of the Andhra prostitutes.

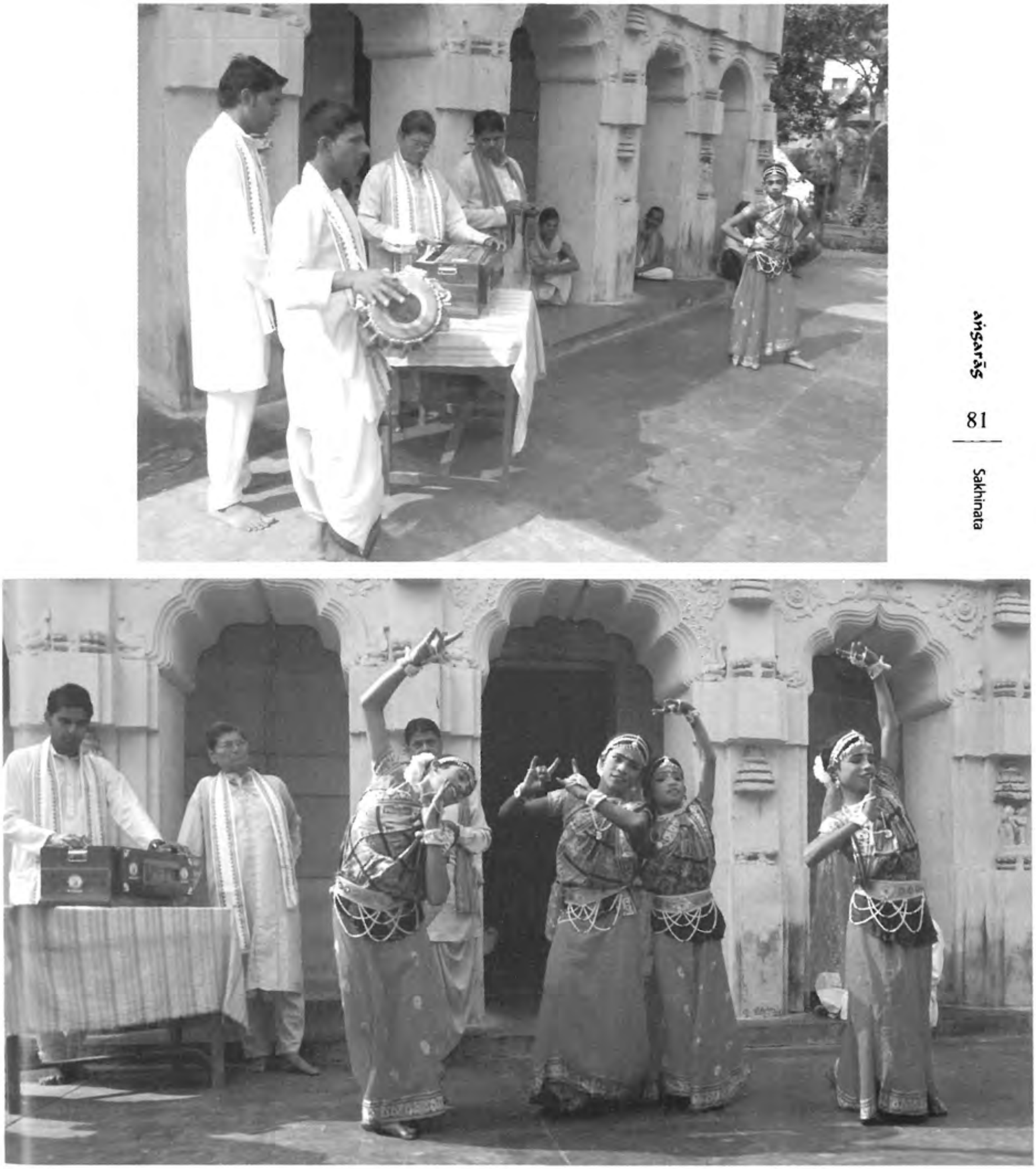
Praharaj's statement although considered as the 'best document' is utterly confusing because he writes, In *sangita dala* (music troupes), one boy sings and dances. In Utkal, tender-aged good looking boys are dressed as girls who sing, dance, and do *abhinaya* on *pouranika*, mythological themes. If these *pouranikaabhinetas* are more than one, they are known as sakhipila. The boy who sings while dancing is called gotipua'.[7] As per Praharaj's understanding, the sakhinata is a group dance whereas the gotipua performances are solos.. But the present practice and performances of the gotipuas do not justify Praharaj's statement. Moreover, gotipua as the single-boy dance to justify its nomenclature is also fallacious.

The boy-dance tradition, be it Sakhinata, *Radhapremalila, Krishnalilla,* or gotipua, is embedded in a complex structure that confirms to militarism, devotionalism, and eroticism. Before they were standardized as gotipua, pre-puberty boy dancers were known as sakhipilas and *natuas.* Although these terms





Sakhipilas of Bhatakumarada Guru-Kuala in Ganjam district
(Photo: Dinanath Pathy)



Sakhinata performance in the Dadhivamana Temple complex, Digapahandi, district Ganjam
(Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2016)



Sakhipilas painting their feet (Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2016)

are synonymous, each has a significant connotation. Sakhipila may dance solo if required, but basically sakhinata is a group dance in which the main dancer needs to communicate his/her feelings through his/ her dancer or companion. In the next sequence, their role might change and the companion will take the role of main dancer. In the dance parlance, of the present time or terminology, the sakhinata could be labelled as a micro-narrative theatre interwoven with dance and music. Sangitapila primarily is a music boy whose performances solely rests on music and its visual articulation. *Akhadapila* is a trainee in an *akhada* (gymnasium), where he practices physical exercises to tone up his body for *hatanata*. Although an *akhadapila* could emerge as a dancer, he is not specifically meant for sakhinata or gotipuanata. Rather he is treated as a potential character in the local dance structure (*natapanjara*). Historians are quite vocal about the role of *akhada* in the evolution of gotipua dance.[8] But *akhada* is not specific to the town of Puri. Majority of traditional villages and towns in Orissa have *akhadagharas*. Without contesting their viewpoint, we would like to emphasize that *akhada* has more than one purpose. *Akhadapila's* role in the Puri Jagannatha Temple, no doubt served a devotional purpose, but their dance remained peripheral. The *akhadapilas* or gotipuas were never allowed to dance inside the temple. Even the *maharis* who were made famous as dancers in writings of present-day authors were no good dancers. They were *bhitara gaunis* or temple singers, the emphasis being more on singing than on dancing. Gotipuas perform on religious festivals and in processions like *chandanajatra* (sandal festival) and *jhulanajatra* (swing festival). They often dance in temple precincts in groups. During the swing festival, gotipuas and sakhipilas converge and dance together. During this conclave, specifically in *mathas* of Puri town, one dance form is influenced by the other. It is generally

believed that these interfusions .taught gotipuas, the *abhinaya* numbers and *sahitya* (song) of the sakhipilas in which they were quite proficient and in the process the sakhipilas learned pure dance from the gotipuas which was mostly the resultant of *akhada* practice. In Ganjam district, in the town of Ganja on Dolapurnima (spring festival evening), several sakhinata troupes perform in a night long revelery on the national highway, even forcing the traffic to take diversions. *Akhadapilas* (comprising sakhipilas and gotipus) are entertainers and these congregations whether in Puri or Ganja town projected, their professional character as dancers and therefore it was natural that the southern influences strongly backed by *sahitya* overpowered the abstract dance. Since the boy dancers dance to the songs composed by poets belonging to south Odisha or as dancers they belong to the south Odisha, they were known as *dakshini natuas* (southern dancers). The south-north (coastal-east included) divide is quite strong in music and dance. In an all India context in the field of music, this divide has flourished as two distinct styles such as the Hindustani and Carnatic. In Odishan context, particularly in the case of boy dancers, the south and north divide is quite visible; while the sakhinata is southern-biased, the gotipua dance displays northern influences.



Sakhinata being performed in the Dadhivamana Temple, Compound
(Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2016)

Sakhipilas do not start dance with a *chauka* as is common with gotipuas and Odissi dancers, instead, stand in *samabhanga* with their left hand resting at their waists and constantly stamping the right leg on the floor rhythmically to the beat of the *tal*.It is a common practice for the sakhipilas to dance in duets, while one dancer dances and shows *abhinaya*, the other stands with his hand at the waist and responds to the moves of his co-dancer. The spirit of the dance is mostly dialectic, one communicating with the other and eliciting

his responses and in the process both of them together project the meaning and mood of the song.

Sakhinata has four basic components, the *vandana* or *janana, abhinaya saregama,* and *hata. Vandana* corresponds to *mangalacharana* and *saregama* to *nritta* or pure dance of neo-classical Odissi. The features such as *bandha, thali* dance, globe dance and other acrobatic numbers of sakhinata have now been given up. Also there is no more emphasis on the aspects of pure dance. Sakhinata has survived with its highly musical expressional dance.

The training imparted to sakhipilas is quite rigorous. The dancers get up early before dawn and spend their morning time in *svarasadhana. Svarasadhana* or the practice of voice modulation is preferred in the cool atmosphere so that the throat gets accustomed to variations. Singing is done between six to seven in the morning followed by the application of *mudras* in dance. This continues till lunch. In between the dance, boys take a break for bath and breakfast around 9 a.m.

After lunch, the dancers are allowed rest for half-an-hour or so and are asked to reassemble for *padasadhana* (foot work practice). For footwork practice, the guru would make the floor wet and ask his disciples to get the floor dry by stumping. At the end of the exercise he would check the mud-stained feet to ascertain his student's sincerity. To make the dancers smart and have beautiful bodies, the guru would ask the dancers to drink a glass of cow urine mixed with turmeric paste at fifteen-day intervals. This non-conventional drink stimulated the body movements and helped slimming. Each dancer had a note book wherein he was asked to copy the poems required for dance .The intensive training period continued for a minimum of six months. But this session is repeated when a dancer is found failing.

The orchestra, comprising *mardala, gini,* and harmonioum, is played standing. The harmonium is placed at times on a stand. The dancers dance and sing simultaneously. Sakhinata is *abhinayapradhana,* histrionics-centric and it has no *sanchari* for which it lacks dramatization.

Before giving a public performance, the troupe moves to a temple in the village and dedicates the dance to the village deity. As a convention the group performs infront of the house of each participating dancer to begin with. The guru is suitably remunerated who receives a number of gifts ranging from rice to gold bracelets, finger rings, and silk dhotis.

The dancers wear Brahamapuri fast colour *pata* silk and blouse. They grow long hair and plait it and fix tassels at the end. Fresh flower garlands are also fixed on the plait. They also fix a brass *antapatia* (waist-band) and put on *khasu* chains - *jigirnanu* and *jhumpa.*

In spite of neglect and lack of government patronage, sakhinata groups survive and perform in and around Ganjam and Gajapati districts. In a rough estimation, the groups would number fifty to sixty.

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Radhapremalila:
A Story of Revival through All India Radio and Doordarshan

Shantanu Kumar Rath



adhapremalila performance, 2015

In the late 19 century, Radhapremalila, the "Love Sports of Radha" crossed he boundaries of the royal court of Chikiti gada, a princely town in south Odisha ınd was endeared by the common villagers. This acceptance resulted in the ormation of several performing groups which fitted very well to the existing music radition. Poems of medieval poets such as Upendra Bhanja, Baladeva Rath and Gopalakrushana Pattanayak were sung and enacted by *sakhipilas* under the ;uidance of Sakhinata masters who moved from village to village to entertain ›eople and earn a lively hood. Sakhinata troupes consisted of five persons, the naster, the mardal player, the harmonium player and two boys who danced as akhis. Sakhi dance formed the nucleus of Radhapremalila, the only difference ›etween the two forms being the loose songs of the former and the songs based ›n a story line of the later. The Radhprematila songs were long and sung with low tempo. Few songs were descriptive and the singer had to use verbal narration ntermittently in his renderings. The songs were dialogic and character-centric. The singer was also the dancer and the actor simultaneously.



The attractive theatre properties were two wooden pavilions in the fashon of *Kelikunjas* comparable with the *Gitagovinda, Amarushataka* and *Ushaharana* illustrations palm-leaf manuscripts of 18th and 19th centuries. These pavilions had raised platforms, carved pillars, pidha roofs and textile buntings and were placed facing each other in a village street. One of the pavilions belonged to Krishna and his friends where as the other to Radha and her companions. Radha and her friends were dressed in saris. Krishna and his cowherd friends wore short dhotis, turbans tucked with peacock feathers.

Radhapremalila songs have two formats, one set of songs was of slow tempo and had *raga* and *ragini* as the basis. The other set was a mixture of songs and dialogic narrations delivered to explain the story and its progress. This is a new kind of experimentation in which songs based on *ragas* could result in story telling dialogues and could revert back to songs. This technique afterwards is responsible for formation of *Gitinatya*. While the Radhapremalila songs did not give up their classical basics, the *Gitinatya* songs on the contrary are sung as *laghu* or free verses.

The task of organizing a Radhapremalila group was challenging. Because all the characters of the *lila* should be pre-puberty boys necessarily below twelve or thirteen years of age, reason being when they grow up their voices start cracking. Therefore like the saying "catch the birds when they are young", the boys are



selected when they are young on the basis of their look and their parents are coaxed and are convinced to spare their sons. About a hundred years back the district of Ganjam was not that advanced in education, the parents were forced to send their male children to join dance troupes. The dance masters used to put in their dedicated service to train them in singing and dancing. Eventually the parents were satisfied that their boys could sing and dance so well. The dance master has to spend years is a village with paltry remuneration that was just enough to maintain his fooding and clothing. Only when the troupe did perform well, the master was sumptuously rewarded with gold bracelets, wrist bands, silk *dhoti* and *chadar*. Then only the dance master did command social prestige.

Earlier the play was enacted evening after evening continuously. But with the passage of time the story was shortened and the enactment was limited to twelve hours. Now a days a portion of the shortened play is performed. Once upon a time there were several Radhapremalila performing troupes in Ganjam. They were active in the villages of Chhachina near Khallikote town, Nimina near Aska town, Podamari, Bomakei, Buguda, Turubudi, Polasara, Turumu near Bhanjanagar and Kolathigan near Berhampur. Incidently both the brothers of a family in the village Nimina; Ananda Charchi and Bhaja Charchi, Ramachandra Sahu of Buguda were famous dance masters of Radhapremalila. They had brought several innovations in the performance without diluting its inner core.



Today Radhapremalila performance is on the decline. It is enacted sparingly by one or two groups. The old masters are dead,. New masters do not venture to earn a living from teaching Radhapremalila dance. Earlier the boy dancers when grew up became masters and this natural channel is now dried up. The youth brigade of Ganjam rather prefer to work in a cotton mill far away in Surat in Gujarat, rather than practice dance in the village. Therefore the future of Radhapremalila seems blink, This also brings in frustration and helplessness.

While I was working in All India Radio, I had made an attempt to convert the *lila* into a radio play format and make it broadcast worthy on Radio. I was stationed as the Director of Berhampur Centre of All India Radio between 1993 to 1997. This had given me ample opportunity to watch and enjoy Radhapremalila in a number of villages of Ganjam. I had spent several nights absorbing the musical essence of the *lila* performances and therefore a desire to document the play grew in me. I invited the groups of B. Turubudi, Podamari and Bomakei who flourished in the region of Diagapahadi to Berhampur All India Radio's studio and recorded each group for about fifteen hours and aired the songs as AIR's regular programme.

The singing style of B. Turubudi group trained under the master Ramachandra Sahu was the best. Most of the songs were sung by master Sahu. Before taking up Radhaprenalila as a profession, he was with Annapurna Theatre as a singer. Of course the recording I had done at Berhampur was selective. I had

given emphasis on the portions those had more of music propensities. However, the storyline was not distorted. One can even today listen to Radhapremalila songs aired from Berhampur centre regularly.

I was transferred to Cuttack. A thought lingered in me: how to improve the quality of singing and make them more listener friendly. Radhapremalila singing by half educated and illiterate boys without proper training was rather raw and it lacked the fineness. It occurred to me that if the songs could be rendered by the recognized singers of the All India Radio, their tonal beauty could be enhanced. The difficulty that posed as a stumbling block was their inexperience to grasp the original singing attitude. It was so different and tough that the Cuttack Radio Centre artists would not be able to bringout the originality of the style. Moreover the artists did not have time and patience to master the style. The most perplexing question was how to limit the entire performing-songs, those originally spread over to several nights, to one hour broadcast without much distorting the story line.

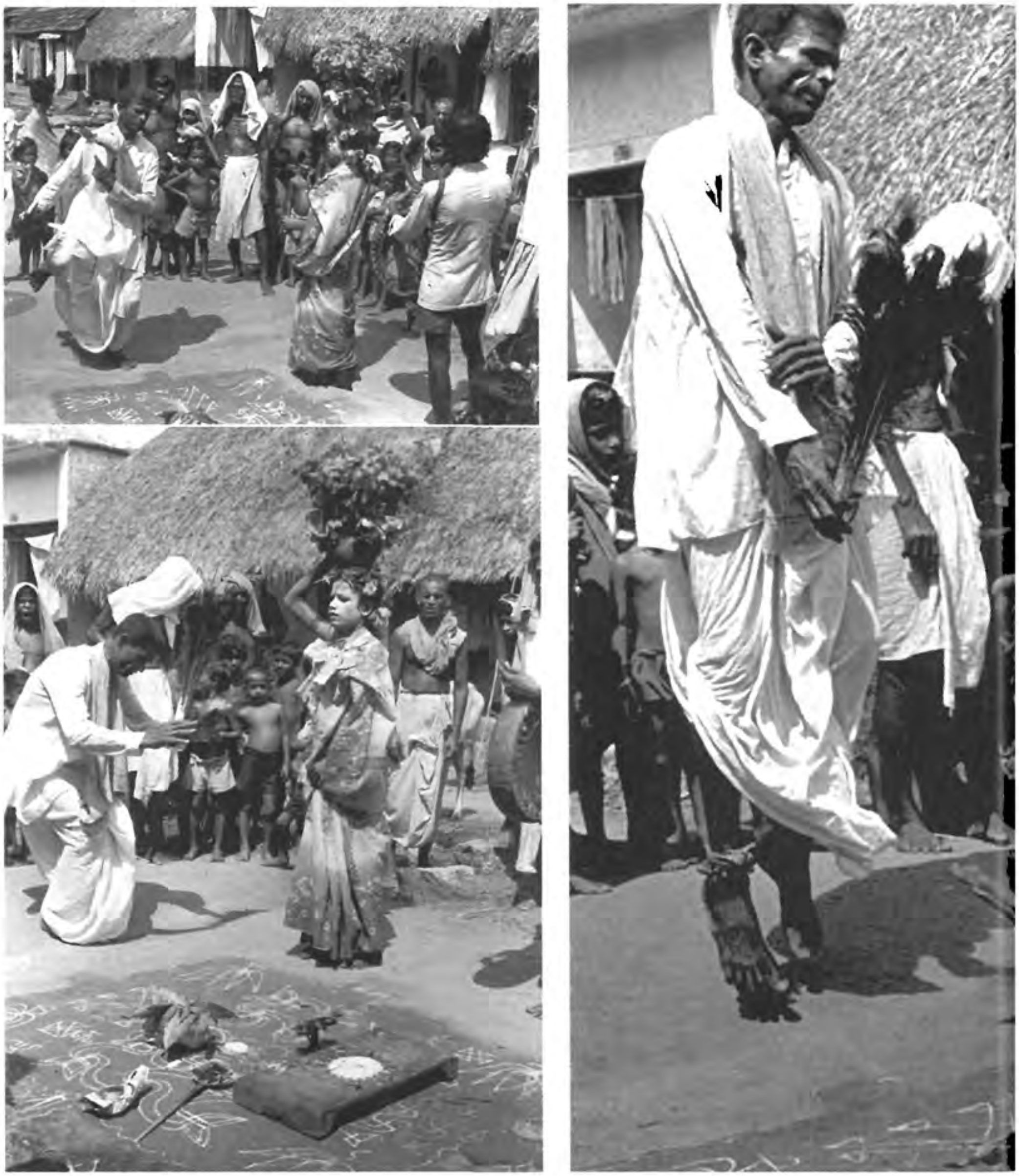
We, at the Cuttack centre, then decided to invite experienced singers from Ganjam. We contacted Dr. Lambodar Panigrahi who was teaching at the local Chikili college and researching on Radhapremalila. With his suggestions six singers from the Chikit region which has given birth to the theatre were invited. I accommodated the singers in my rented house at Cuttack. They were able to devote long hours for recording that spread over to two days. Basant Mohanty and music director Omprakash Mohanty of AIR suggested to abridge and shorten the singing time to one hour by picking up more suitable songs for broadcast. They further suggested and inspired me to sing the original tunes, that I had remembered any way into the mobile phones of the All India Radio artists which they could imitate and practice at home. Lambodar Paingrahi selected the songs which could be sung within an hour. The artists returned to the studio after rehearsing the songs privately. On the first day of the recording we devoted about ten hours to record for one hour broadcast. The second day the local expert singers had to be accustomed with the typical Ganjam style of rendering the dialogues those connected the songs. It was really tough for the Cuttacki to acquire Ganjami singers' intonations. Our efforts bore fruit and we were all excited when Radhapremalila songs were put on air on the 27th September 2015 at 9.30 in the evening. But sadly enough I was not there at the Cuttack AIR centre with my colleagues to listen and enjoy the songs. I was transferred to Doordarshan, Bhubaneswar centre and could not gauge the reactions of the programme listeners.

At the moment, in the Television Centre, Bhubaneswar I am on my passion project to add visuals to the recorded songs of AIR. This seems no easy an adventure because I don't want to dilute the theatre by introducing female Odissi dancers who could probably dance better than untrained Gajam Sakhiboys. But that would not be the Radhapremalila of Ganjam, could be it may take little more time, but definitely feasible in the near future.

(Translated by Soubhagya Pathy)

Dancers and Spirits Osakothi Rituals

Soubhagya Pathy

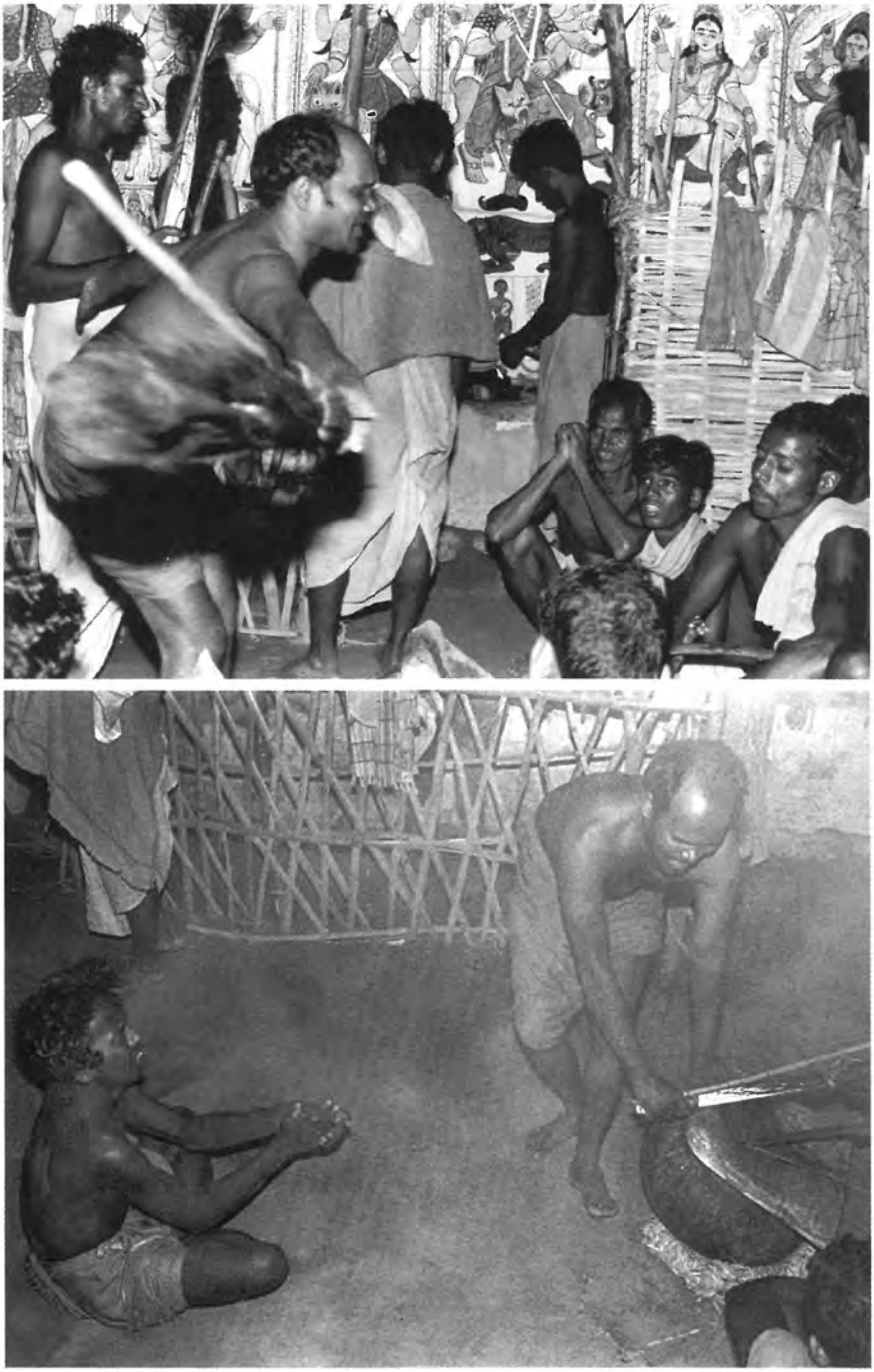


Gayeni and Mangala dancing (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1986)

Osakothi ritual, observed in hundreds of villages in south Odisha, is unique as an interface between dance, trance, poetry, music, and painting. The thrust of the ritual is the propitiation of spirits in the form of wall paintings, which is much akin to the Saura icons on the walls. While in Saura icons, it is just the *bejuni,* the medium, in Osakothi there are several trance-dancers called the *devatas* or the spirits who are possessed of several painted manifestations on the wall. The



Gayeni and Mangala dancing (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1980)



Devata dancing possessed in the Osakothi Shrine
(Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1980)

Thakurani (chief goddess) in the form of Mahisamardini Durga, Mangala, Kali, multiplies herself as several village goddesses who are in fact her daughters and sons. *Devata* is a transgender term, a spirit who comes out of the painting when evoked by the *jani* (the priest)and the *gayeni* (the singer). The *devata* in the evening ritual stands before a particular painting concentrating on the form and its attributes. The *jani* holds a fire pot sprinkled *with jhuna* (resin dust) in front of the painting. The smoke billows and makes the ritual space aromatic. The . air gets tipsy and when the priest puts a vermilion mark on the painting and in turn touches the forehead of the *devata*-dancer, the spirit seems transferred. The dancer who holds a bunch of peacock feathers now shivers and shrills. The spirit takes possession of the dancer, who becomes restless, moves forward, backward, trembles, and jumps leaping like a frog. The *devata* changes his self and identity into that of the spirit visually manifested in the painting, answers questions asked by the singer. After the question-answer session is over, the spirit is bade farewell. Pots filled with turmeric and molasses water are placed and out of exhaustion due to constant dancing, he faints and lies listless on the ground. When a dancer turns wild, the singer and the priest, or other members of the ritual gathering physically control him. There are several dancers, the ritual space seems like a performing arena and the *devata*-dancers start entering into the space as characters in a play.

The evening ritual turns out to be a spectacle in front of the painting. The *devatas* play the roles of Goddesses and Gods when possessed and behave as normal human beings when they are off the ritualistic arena. The social relations, the strife, and tribulations they undergo in their ordinary life sometimes get reflected in their performance as spirits. The interpersonal relationships as well as the inter-possessive ritualistic behaviour are not exclusive but inclusive of the total gamut of the Osakothi festival.

The *devatas* devise their own moral code, and the aesthetics of painting and poetry are formed out of the creative surges. The mood is one of narrative and make-belief. The villagers operate in their world of innocence and the members of the ritualistic group, who come from the oppressed class, rely upon their own grammar and operative skill. The dividing line between the spiritual and the material merge and faith works wonders.

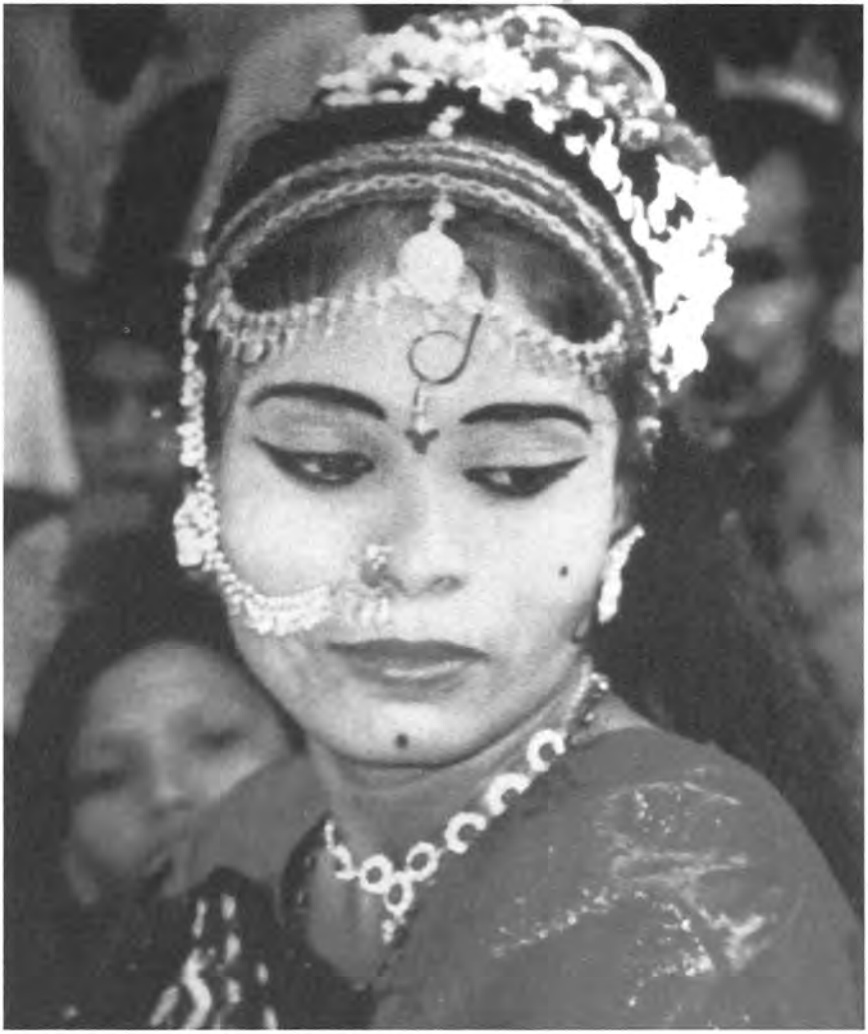
(Earlier published in *Imaging Odisha*, Prafulla, 2013)



Dhanakoila, musical Instrument and devata singing (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1980)

Lilas of South Odisha

Dillip Kumar Tripathy



Radha in Radhapremalila (Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy)

Lila is a lyrical play based on an epical narration. The play is interspersed with music, dance, dialogue, and dramatization. This is centred on the life of Gods and Goddesses, who take human bodies in this world and through their miraculous deeds redeem the earth of the evil. Lilas in Odisha are predominantly Vaishnavite in character and are deeply connected with the *bhakti* movement that swept Odisha in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Bhakti centred on the lives of Rama and Krishna, two epic heroes who have influenced literatures, painting, sculpture, and performances alike, over a period of four to five hundred years. Krishna, the epitome of *Sringara rasa* has a greater preference over Rama who depicted *Karunya* and *Vira* sentiments. *Bhagavata Purana* was translated into Odia by Jagannatha Dasa. Balarama Dasa recreated the *Ramayana*. These two texts provided the basis for further creations suitable for enactments. The tenth chapter of the *Bhagavata* narrated the birth and childhood of Krishna as well as the love and romance in which the *gopis* and *sakhis* had a popular role. The childhood plays enacted in Gopa by Krishan is known as Krishnalila, whereas the love episodes were performed as *rasalila*.


Krishna (Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2016)

The followers of vaishnavism were sharply divided into two groups, such as the Gaudiya and Utkaliya. While the Gaudiyas preferred pure *bhakti*, the Utkaliyas had a kind of mixture, *gyana misra bhakti*, devotion tinged with a search for knowledge. However, both the groups preferred the performance of *kirtan* and *lilas*. They mostly recruited boys and not girls as dance partners. The *kirtans* and *lilas* which centred around Krishna had a tinge of Bengali influence. They were mild and lyrical compared to those of Rama enacted on Odia scripts in more vigorous formats.

In *lila* performance, there is a chief singer who, through his singing, narrates a story, at times relies on his memory, but often depends on a manuscript held in hand. The spectators sit around in a circular arena which functions as in acting zone. The green room is located off the acting zone inside the nearby temple, community house, or a living room of the patron. The performance is held in daylight when it runs through several hours or in the evening with electric bulbs hanging from the makeshift bamboo canopy.

The characters come to the stage with makeup, wearing bright coloured silk saris, decorated with *zari* crowns, waist bands, chains, necklaces, and earrings. As a kind of colonial hangover, the male characters like Krishna and Balaram fix an

apron at the back. Nowadays female characters use *ghagara* and *choli* instead of a sari. Of course in south Odishan *lilas*, *ghagara* and *choli* are standard dress.

The *lila* groups use several props like a stepped wooden altar called *kunja* in Radhapremalila and a criss-cross wooden improvisation, representing the mythical serpent Kaliya, in Krishnalila. In Ramalila, use of masks for portraying the demonic characters is quite significant as it involves the work of visual artists. In Bharatalila, a wooden chair forms the main stage property. The stage properties in Ramalila arc quite vast which are transported on bullock carts along with the group. The musical instruments comprise a harmonium, a *dholaka, mardala, mrudanga, gini, jodinagara,* and *jhumuka.*

Lilas have remained a tradition in south Odisha, at least for the last three hundred years. The[1] literary tradition which is quite strong in the region has sustained all these forms over the years. Among the major *lila* writers the names of following playwrights could be mentioned. They are Pindika Srichandana, author *of Rasas* and Jadu Das, author of' *Premanuraga Rasa, Bansi Chori Danalila, Kaliya Dalana Lila, Godhana Bahada Lila* in Odia. Dukhishyama Das is another brilliant writer who had composed *Krishnalila.* Dukhishyama, who is basically a Bengali and a Gaudiya Vaishnava, composed this *lila* during his sojourn at Puri. Some enthusiast from Purushottamapur town in the Ganjam district collected the play and inspired his fellow villagers to perform it. This provided the impetus to other writers like K. Harihara of Srikakulam and Lakshminarayan of Berhampur to compose similar lyrical plays.

Ramalila text has a different temper. Kalpataru Das of Buguda town in Ganjam district composed a *Ramalila*. His composition is free from both Bengali and Telugu influences. Kalpataru's work is full of imaginative episodes making the presentation charming. The text consists of 1167 songs and is strikingly different from the north Odishan Ramalilas, which are more akin to Banarasi Ramalilas performed in the spirit of the Valmiki Ramayana's text. Besides Kalpataru, there are a number of authors like Pitamvara Rajendra, a scion of the royal family of Chikiti gada, Sadasiva Das, and Kesava Patnaik of south Odisha who introduced a number of dramatic elements reducing the songs considerably. Bipra Janardana and Vikrama Narendra of Chikiti gada had composed Sri *Ramacharitamrutalila* and *Raghavacharitamrutalila* with the patronage of Raja Krishna Chandra Debo of Chikiti. The *raja* himself had composed a *Ramalila* which is famous as Chikiti Ramalila in the whole of south Odisha.

The royal family of Chikiti had definite contributions in promoting *lila* literature. Raja Biswambhara Rajendra composed a new format based on Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* called Radhapremalila and got it enacted in the ideal ambiance of his palace. He also got constructed a wooden *kunja* plated with silver and gold. His son Kishore Chandra performed the role of Krishna and it turned out to be a reality show in which he was finally wedded to the Radha character, the princesses of

Kanika. Of course, the historicity of the wedding is yet to be confirmed. As time went by, the Radhapremalila crossed the royal confines of the palace and travelled to several villages and towns in and around Chikiti gada with the patronage of Raja Radhamohana Rajendra Debo, in the twentieth century.

Radhapremalila is replete with heart-throbbing episodes of love and separation between the two divine lovers Radha and Krishna. Radha's eternal lover Krishna approaches his love dressed as different characters to create varying impression and win her love.

Bharatalila is yet another popular performance that centres on the love and marriage of Arjuna and Subhadra, The narration of the play has been taken from *Harivamsa* and with this the three major epics, the *Ramayana*, *Bhagavata*, and the *Mahabharata* have been partly utilized by the *lila* writers and performers. The author Sibaram Pradhan belongs to western Orissa who also happened to be a choreographer. He collaborated with Mahadev Kar, a sakhinata master of Ganjam district while he was being deployed in the tea gardens in Assam. It was Mahadeva, who after his return from Assam,organized a troupe and started the performance. It is said that the first Bharatalila performance was enacted in Jhadabei village, near Aska town in the middle of the twentieth century. The main character is the *Duari*, a gatekeeper of the royal place who assumes the role of a hero and negotiates with Satyabhama, queen of Krishna, on one hand, and with Arjuna on the other, and facilitates the marriage of Subhadra with Arjuna. The play is interspersed with several farcical episodes like a habitual drunkard belonging to the lowest rung of the society. The other humble characters like the washer man and his wife appear in the play, which generate good humour.

Manabhanjana, which is enacted with lots of dance items, reflects that the Gaudiya Vaishnava *rasa* has been improvised from traditional Rasalila as formats have been adopted by the Odissi dancers bereft of its dialogic exchanges. Most of the *lilas* of south Odisha are languishing. Only Bharatalila, which has more theatrical inputs and farcical episodes, is surviving satisfactorily. But even this *lila* has started introducing Hindi cinema stances and Bollywood dance numbers to catch the fantasy of the young generation.

(Earlier published in *Imaging Odisha*, Prafulla, 2013)



Parshurama handi (pot) with ten incarnation motifs of Vishnu, painted by Prakash Mahapatra of Paralakhemandi (Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 2015)

Kalaghoda Dance

Dillip Kumar Tripathy



Kalaghoda (Photo: Dillip Kumar Tripathy, 2016)

Horse has been an important motif in the field of art, not only in India but also in the whole world. It is therefore the universal motif which has occurred in sculptures, paintings, textiles and various other minor arts. Because of its antique importance in the field of art, it has been able to influence both the religious and social life of the people since ages. Horse is a very strong and useful animal which has been exploited by man for transportation and its role in war was indispensable. There are innumerable stories narrating the importance of horse The role of the horse has been indispensable due to its unique physique, swiftness and untiring perseverance to endure hardships and thrive in most difficult situations both in war and peace times.

The image of horse is very much vivid in the form of terracottas under the banyan and neem trees at the entrance of the villages in Odisha. Here, the horse stands as an offering so that the *Thakurani*, mother Goddess can use it as *Vahana* (carrier). It is believed that the mother Goddess and her sons ride these horses to supervise the welfare of the devotees during the still hours of the night amidst the winding lanes of the villages. In the realm of religion horses have been rendered in various forms of art in our state, because of its varied manifestations.

Of all the forms of horses; the form of *Kalaghoda* (mechanized horse) is the most colorful and innovative .Among the prevalent horse dances in Odisha both *Kalaghoda* and *Chaitighoda* are noteworthy. while the tradition of *Kalaghoda* is well popular in Ganjam district and in south Odisha, the *Chaitighoda* is the common festive occurrence in the district of Puri. During the month of *Chaitra*(March and April)the fishermen community or the *Kaivartas* of eastern Odisha specifically in Puri district observe *Chaitraparva* and perform *Chaitighoda* dance. In this dance, an effigy of a horse is suspended from the shoulders of the dancer with the help of strings which covers his body a little below the waist. A colored sari hangs from the lower rim of the effigy fully covering the legs of the dancer. This horse dancer could move his legs freely with the tune of the music.

But the concept of *Kalaghoda* is little different from the *Chaitighoda* dance. In *Kalaghoda* dance a pair of dancers form the pair of fore and hind legs of the horse. The dancer who is placed on the front side holds the painted wooden head of the horse with the help of a long stick .The horses are quite large and huge and are produced with the application of three craft skills such as basketry, patch work and painting. The body of the horse is prepared out of cane, bamboo and stringed nets. It is extremely flexible and collapsible and could be extended and folded as per the need. The body is without the neck, head and the tail There is only the bust which is known as *Panjara* (cage, skeleton). Two performers get into the cage from back and front and form the hind and front legs. When the performers start dancing, it appears as if the animal dances rhythmically. The performers are quite experienced and know how to coordinate their dancing steps to the tune of music. The *Panjara* gets a colourful patch work over it known as *bedhana* or covering. The covering lands a spectacular sight when the animal dances and moves in the procession led and monitored by a leader known as



Kala bagha

Adhikari. The size of the cage varies and it provides the contours to the animal. It also provides contraction and expansion and gives a feeling of liveliness. The neck portion of the effigy is like a long pipe. A painted wooden animal mask fitted to a long stick is inserted into this hole. The mask-head is beautifully painted.

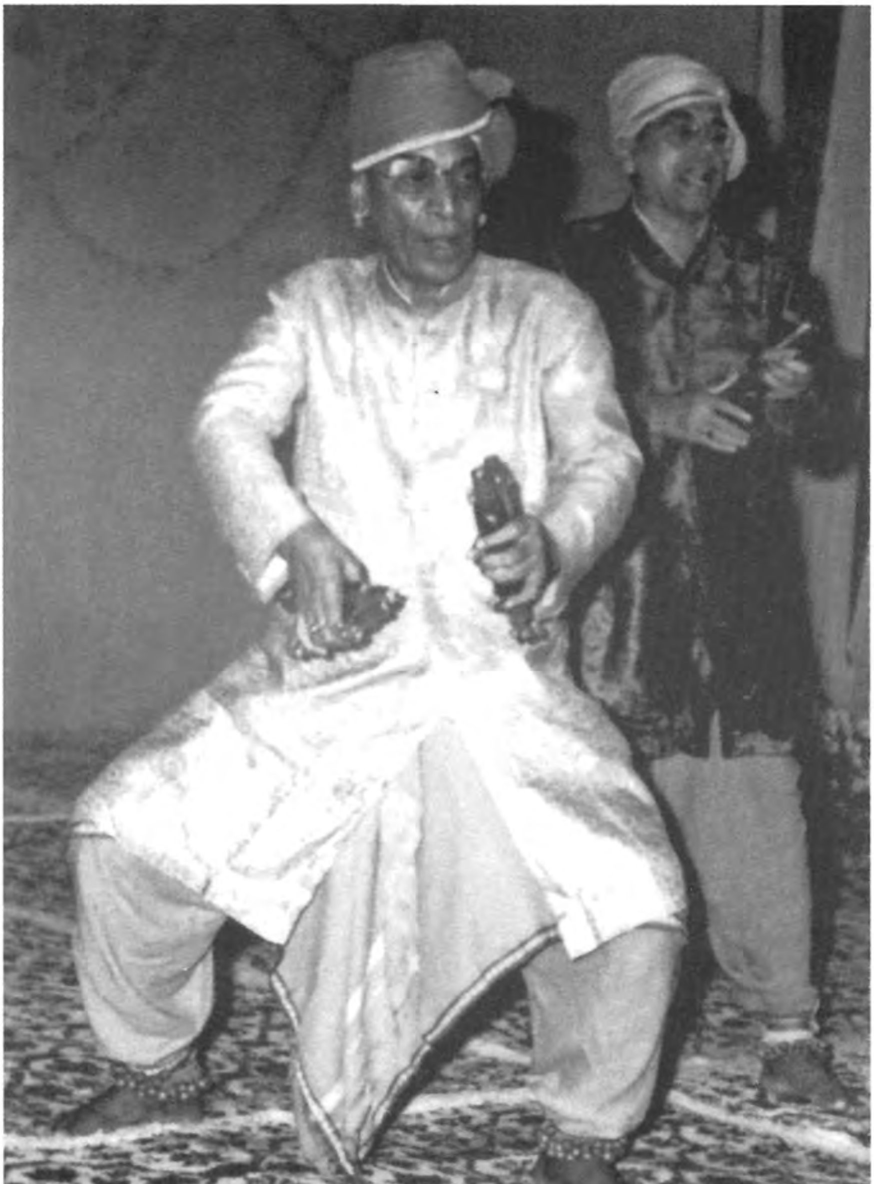
The orchestra that accompanies the animal comprises a piper who blows the trumpet, a *changu* and cymbal players. A number of effigies of varying characters are fashioned and taken out in the procession. These effigies could be of horse, bull, new elephant (*Navagunjara*). But all these horses are known by a generic term such as *Kalaghoda*. Except for the mask all this effigies look similar. There could be a small variation in case of the bull (*Brushava*) which gets a hump at the back. This hump is attached to the cloth covering.

Each major temple, *matha* or community house in large villages and small towns stores a group of these effigies. They add colour and beauty to festive processions of the temple. Rich people in the towns hire *Kalaghoda* for wedding processions. *Kalaghoda* dance is a common performance in villages. The steppings of the dancer reflect a kind of *tripata tala - Jhiniki jhina jhina, Tiniki tina tina*. This seems an improvised spontaneous tune and very often used in case of other dance forms. Baghanata also follows these stepping.

Of late palitical parties have started using these effigies in rallies and reception of their leaders when they pay visits to their areas. Along with applique umbrellas, *chhatris* and fans *trasas, Kalaghodas* form a regalia and have travelled far and wide.

Dasakathia

Sitakant Mahapatra



Baidyanath Sharma and his Palia (Photo courtesy, Government of Odisha)

Somewhat resembling Pala, this is the most popular item and form of ballad-singing in Odisha. It is limited to only two performers—the main singer and his *palia* (technically the one who catches on or repeats the original). As in Pala here too the *palia* makes the performance extremely interesting and lively by his various intrusions with wit, humour, and mock challenges to the main singer. The *palia* provides the comic relief and a facade for the progress of the main narrative that uses themes taken primarily from the two epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The *Palia's* banters and humorous interludes makes the performance lively as hundreds of village-folk witness the performance with rapt attention and emotive participation. The performance's main emphasis is on singing and only slightly on the foot and body movements of both the main singer and his *palia*.

The composition of the songs generally follow the meter popularly known as *chhandas, chaupadis,* and *chautisas.* They are highly traditional tunes and give the ballad-singing Dasakathia form its distinct identity. Apart from the two epics the compositions used are from the medieval poets of Odisha.

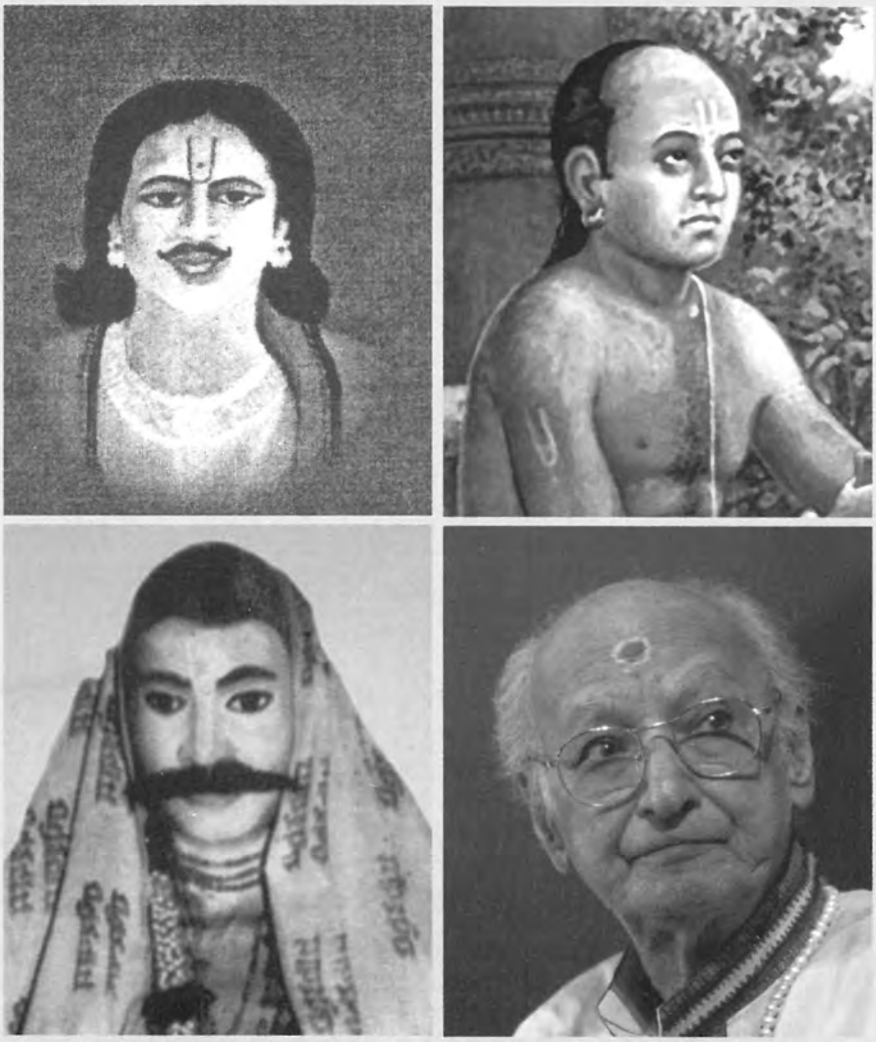
A pair of castanets or wooden clappers are played rhythmically as the accompaniment to the singing. They are called Dasakathi or Ramtali. The clappers have a bunch of small ankle bells which jingle while the clappers are sounded. The two clappers are held in an intricate manner in the left hand while it is played by the right hand. The dexterity which is very demanding comes from regular practice. This author has seen very experienced main singers who play even two pairs of clappers with ease and unmatched skill. The recurring sequences of prose-dialogue between the two and the main singer's singing makes it a very interesting form.

Dasakathia is primarily associated with Ganjam, the southern district of Odisha from where it has travelled to other parts of the state. Coincidentally, most of Odisha's celebrated medieval poets were also from this district, Their religious and love lyrics are deservedly rare treasures of Odia literature. The Dasakathia singer performs the role of a folk continuation of this great school of medieval lyric poetry. Gayakaratna Baidyanath Sharma was the most celebrated performer of this form of balled singing and had gained recognition for soulful renderings in his inimitable style.

(Earlier published in *Imaging Odisha*, Prafulla, 2013)

Music Traditions of South Odisha

Bijay Kumar Rath



Upendra Bhanja, Baladev Rath, Gopalkrushna Pattanayak and Raghunath Panigrahi,
First three portraits painted by Harisharan Mahapatra.

I put forth my experience not as an expert but as an observer about music in Paralakhemandi. During my school days, along with my general studies, I attempted to learn Carnatic music from a renowned musician of Paralakhemandi. I had observed the difference in the music styles prevalent at the place at the time. This experience was further enriched later at Berhampur and when I visited other parts of south Odisha. I distinctly remember that the Carnatic style was the dominant form of music in the then south Odisha where it pervaded the mind-set of people and its use in different performing art forms like Sakhinata, Radhapremalila and Prahallada Nataka was commendable. At the same time I could learn the difference between the newly developed music system called Odissi and the southern style more from the attempts of the group who were trying to project this new system rather than its rendering style. In fact my whole idea on performing art of Odisha, particularly the Odissi dance and music, is now changed because of certain inherent defects found in the historical origin and as claimed in several writings on the subject of both the systems, and the arguments advanced by experts in giving present Odissi dance and music an antique value and claiming their origin and historicity from very early period. I have always believed that we should correctly project our findings in a proper perspective without being biased by regional fervor before outsiders point a finger at us about our ignorance or stupidity or lack of historical sense.

First let me share my early experience in Paralakhemandi and Berhampur. Around 1962-64, at the bidding of my father, my elder brother and myself started learning Carnatic music from late Ananta Charana Patra of Karana Street in Paralakhemandi. At that time we had three versatile musicians at Parlakhemandi. They were Ananta Charana Patra, his brother Bhakta Patra and one Suryanarayana, a Telugu artist. While the Patra brothers were Vina maestros, the Telugu artist was an expert in violin. Besides, there was a *Mahant* of a local *matha* who was an expert in *Mridanga*. I was to learn the basics of the style and then practice *Mridanga* which never happened as I lost interest during learning of the basics. However, my elder brother continued and learnt playing Vina. Both Bhakta Patra and Ananta Patra were recognized Carnatic Vina artists of All India Radio at Cuttack. Late Ananta Patra used to stay at Cuttack at that time. When the new style of Odissi dance and music were being given a wide publicity and encouragement at Cuttack, Ananta Patra left Cuttack with disgust and returned to Paralakhemandi without becoming a party to this so called revival of the classical form. He had staunch belief in the two distinct forms of Hindustani and Carnatic music and could not accept this new version as original. During our classes he used to give one good example of this new system saying that this new Odissi music does not give importance to the *raga* and *tala* based on which the original poets composed the songs. But it gives only the rendering by an artist of the particular song as an example of Odissi rendering. At that time I had checked and verified his observation as correct from the announcements of Odissi programmers on All India Radio, Cuttack, particularly from the compositions of Gopalakrushna Pattanaik and Kavi Surya Baladeva Ratha since we had at our place the books of these two great



Krishna in chauka bhangi, mural painting,
Jagannatha Temple, Dharakote, early 20th century
(Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1985)



A Gopi dancing in chauka bhangi, mural painting
Jagannatha Temple, Dharakote, early 20th century
(Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1985)

poets. This was also the same practice, surprisingly until a decade ago, at Bhubaneswar which I had noticed in many cultural programmes organized at private and government level and this I had pointed out to several gurus and musicians.

Whenever we had any cultural programme with music, it used to be of Carnatic style. Similarly in the Sakhinata performances the music used to be of the same Carnatic style. This I faintly remember as we used to see Telugu mythological movies where the Carnatic style was more prominent. Another interesting fact was that Late Raghunath Panigrahi, the famous singer, was from Gunupur and there was intimate friendship between our families. His father, being a good musician of the southern style, inspired him to learn Carnatic music and after learning the style at Madras he became a dominant and popular play-back singer of south Indian films, particularly Telugu films. Although later he became versatile in Odissi music, there was a distinct Carnatic influence in his renderings. Similarly late Guru Bhubaneswar Mishra, who hailed from Machamara near Paralakhemandi, was an expert in Carnatic system and a versatile violin player. Later he became a renowned composer in Odissi music. His compositions are still followed by many contemporary singers and dancers. In fact all the original crusaders of Odissi music were staunch followers of either Hindustani or Carnatic systems at the beginning of their career.

I also remember my cousin sisters learning music at Berhampur during 1960s from a famous local musician, the late Narayana Behera, who was also an artist of the All India Radio at Cuttack. His style was totally influenced by the Carnatic style. In Dharakote I saw for the first time the performance of Prahallada Nataka and was astonished about the pure Carnatic style of music being adopted in the theatre. This was during early 1990s. All these incidences added to my

experience with the colleagues from the Utkala Sangita Mahavidyalya like the late Guru Debaprasad Das, Dr. Damodara Hota, Pandit Gopala Panda as well as conversations with Late Raghunath Panigrahi, Dhirendranath Patnaik among others led me to doubt the authenticity and historicity of the present Odissi dance and music styles. In his seminal work, the late Dhirendranath Patnaik refers to different treatises on music and dance by early writers of Odisha belonging to a period from the 16^{th} to 19^{th} century. A majority of these works are from the writers of south Odisha and definitely they never wrote presupposing the present Odissi system. Obviously they wrote as per the traditions prevalent in the region which had great influence of the southern style now known as the Carnatic style on them. This is still reflected in the performing art forms of the region like the Prahallada Nataka, Radhapremalila, Sakhinata etc. At the same time, the earlier system prevalent in the central and coastal Odisha was no doubt influenced by the Hindustani system of music being the seat of power where the Muslims, Moghuls and the Afghans ruled as Governors. This could be the reason that the present Odissi music is greatly influenced by the Hindustani style and although the Odissi dance is recognized as a classical form, the music on which it is based is unfortunately not recognized as classical. I have quite often heard from the likes of late J.B. Patnaik and others about the culture of Odisha as the true culture of south Odisha. To conclude one interesting example about the dress and ornamentation used in the Odissi dance, the *Tahia* and the *Bengapatia* as used in the attire of an Odissi dancer are never reflected on any of the sculptural representation on temples of Bhubaneswar, Konark and other monuments up to the Suryavamsi period anywhere in Odisha. But surprisingly it is represented in the late 19^{th} century Jagannatha Temple at Dharakote in Ganjam district. This is amazing and interesting to point out that south Odisha influence is reflected in the system of present Odissi dance form. Similarly the Sakhinata of south Odisha was the earlier form than the Gotipua tradition. Sakhinata has definitely influenced the present Odissi dance which was totally forgotten while reviving the dance in 1950s. Surprisingly in earlier Odissi concerts, be it dance or music, musical instruments associated with the Hindustani music like the sitar, pakhauj and violin were used by the musicians highlighting the Hindustani influence. Of course nowadays Mardala is used and sitar is largely omitted. Interestingly we do not come across the use of sitar in our early sculptures; instead we only find the use of vina.

However, what is important now is further research and proper coordination to trace the authentic origin and historicity of these forms.

Ganjam: Polishing an Unhewn Diamond

Gajendra Kumar Panda



Guru Gajendra Kumar Panda (Photo: Sutra Archives)

I was overwhelmed to get a mail from Ramli who wrote that he wanted to embark upon a dance project which would be named GANJAM Odissi. I have experienced working with Ramli Ibrahim who was highly innovative with a mind set to strike at the roots, to dive deep into the source, and the traditions. Ramli always aims at new music, new dance forms and new choreography. Initially I had no hesitation to collaborate with Ramli for such a challenging dance project because as an inheritor of Guru Debaprasad style, I always take up new challenges and explore possibilities which would carry me forward. However, this was not without discouraging comments from conservative critics. A dance symposium held in 1994 at Delhi in which late Dhirendranath Patnaik had strongly criticized my *Dasamahavidya* choreography. Had Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan not stood up to strongly defend the amalgamation of folk elements into Odissi to make it vibrant, Dhirendranath would have won the day. At the instance of Dr. Vatsyayan I explained to the gathering that, "I have relied heavily upon the *bhramari* as explained in the *Sahityadarpana*, a treatise which supports the classicism of Odisi. The specific dance forms of Ganjam such as Prahallada Nataka, Kalikaprabha Nata, Kothishala Nata and Navadurga Nata contain such folk elements which confirm to classical standards and these have been assimilated to the composition of *Dasamahavidya*."

My choreography had stirred the stagnant thinking of a few scholars who had not gone beyond the *Jayantika* format of 1950s. When I was asked by Ramli to take up the challenge, my initial hesitation changed into conviction and I thought I could brush up my ideas and arrive at new and startling combinations. Ramli had further asked me to get in touch with Dr. Dinanath Pathy for his suggestions which I did. But Dr. Pathy said he had a recent tour of Ganjam with Dr. Shantanu Kumar Rath, Director of Bhubaneswar Doordarshan Kendra and did not find much encouraging response. He advised me to use the existing dance traditions of Sakhinata, Radhapremalila and Rama Nataka. He also reminded me of our joint efforts to revive Sakhinata which led to the first ever Sakhinata Festival at Bhatakumarada near the Ashokan inscription site of Jaugada in which Ramli also participated. His suggestions gave me enough strength and I started to chart my course of action.

I decided to frame *Mangalacharana* on the lines of Prahallada Nataka and met several masters of the traditional theatre in the towns of Digapahandi, Balugan and Sunathara. I had a long discussion with the senior most master Krushna Mohan Sahu and made video recordings of Nrusimha vandana with steppings and body movements. I also patiently listened to the audio recordings of *slokas* and songs and selected three most important invocation slokas- *Satyam gyana sukham... Svarupa mamalam kshiavdhimadhyesthitam ... garjantam garjaiyantam Lakshnipate Kamalanabha* ... etc ......

I formatted the *slokas* using *sabda*-punctuating syllables which was the tradition of Devaprasad Gharana. I wanted the famous musician Ramahari Das to set the tone. He was extremely busy and I was nervous because the time of arrival of Ramli in Odisha was drawing nearer. I decided to contact Gopala Chandra Panda and mardal wizard Banamali Maharama. Both of them gave me a lot of hope and my nervousness vanished and I was sure to have something in hand to discuss with Ramli when he would be in Bhubaneswar. Gopal Chanda Panda with pursuation of his daughter Sangeeta set the first sloka, Gananatvam ganapati... in *raga* Mangal gujjari. For the next *sloka* we chose *raga* Lalita.

For *thainata* I wanted to use the *Sarigama* of Sakhinata which was the practice adhered to by late Raghunath Purohita, my former Sakhinata teacher. Gopal Chandra Panda agreed to my suggestion. But to remember the *tala*, beats was challenging for me. I had to take recourse to the styles of *Mridanga* players of yester years such as Kandha Bahaka, Dandasi Bahaka, Shiva Bahaka and decided to use the *bols*, *khindiri khindiri khinda*, *dhindiri dhindiri dhinda*. When I consulted with Ishwara Reddy, he made minor changes and suggested that I should use *khindara, dhindara dhinda* as *jamana. thindar thindar, thinda* as *laganta*. I was initially at a loss to think of suitable *sabda* for *thai* because without that, *thai* will lose its novelty and may not meet the approval of Ramli. In fact I was terribly perplexed but did not loose courage.

Thainata has to be of a new order, no amount of collaging will help and I was scared of the discerning eyes of Ramli and Dr. Pathy and even of the two astute senior dancers of Sutra - Divya and Geethika. These two girls will not hesitate to point out to me. "Guruji this we knew much before". I therefore relied upon the characteristics of male grace and feminine grace of dancers as codified under *Nartaka lakshana* and *Nartaki lakshana* and added three *sabdas* to the composition. The *slokas* accentuated the beauty and quality of dancers.

Anga sudhanga subhanga suvakta
Tala prabandah nrutya tatvagyanta
Sunartaka, Sunartaka, Sunartaka,

To this I added from Nandikesvara's *Abhinaya Darpana* the following lines

Unnata kucha kumbha yugala
Damvuru kati vimva adhara
Amvodhara gadha kuntala
sunartaki laskhana

To enrich the *slokas* in consonance with Ganjam flavour, I thought of the Duari character of Bharatalila of Phasi village and the steppings of *pilakhai dahani* (who steals and devours babies) and concluded the *thai* with a long *arsa*.

Dr. Pathy is not a musician though, he has grown up in Digapahandi, the quintessential town that had reared several forms of traditional theatres from Prahallada Nataka, Sakhinata, Krishnalila to Radhapremalila and Ramalila. These forms had given him insight and he quotes profusely from these in his art fictions. Ramli is of the view that the musicians who perform for several dance groups hardly have time to think something exclusive and unless the music composition is very special, the dance would be ordinary. We three admired the stamina, perseverance and uniqueness of Ganjam singers and dancers and wanted to make our GANJAM Odissi truly vibrant.

I remembered the sayings of my guru Devaprasad who when met me for the first time and conducted a sort of interview along with Bhubaneswar Mishra opined that Sakhinata added with *chauka* and *tribhanga* becomes classical Odissi. He pronounced this when he realized that I already knew hundreds of *champu*, *chaupadi* and *bhajans* of the celebrated poets of Ganjam such as Upendra Bhanja, Kavisurya and Gopalakrushna. He did not hide his feelings when he said that at the Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya only thirty to forty songs were taught over a period of five years. I was fortunate to be admitted to his domain as his student only due to my Ganjam credentials. I am convinced that both Ramli and Dr. Pathy like me for my knowledge (whatever I have) that I have acquired from my earlier guru Raghunath Purohit and of course from guru Debaprasad. Ganjam is an unexplored area, marginalized and it did not get its due when Odissi was reconstructed in Cuttack. I realized that none of the great masters who were involved in the Odissi reconstruction were from Ganjam. Although Bhubaneswar

Mishra was largely responsible for several *Pallavis* which guru Kelucharan Mahapata did, but I wish my teacher Raghunath Purohit were included in this grand exercise of building neo-classical Odissi. I felt I was making a second revival of Odissi with the help of Ramli, Dr. Pathy, Gopal Chandra Panda, Banamali Maharana, Ramahari Das and Dhaneswar Swain. I did not like to ignore all those who in some way or other were associated with present Odissi and involved with festival culture like Kedar Misha, Shyamahari Chakra and the like. But I could sense that my salvation lay somewhere else with those people who strongly believed that Odissi should expand; expand not with whimsicality, cooked in an imaginary territory of no substance but with authenticity and authority which might need compassion and mental equilibrium to understand and absorb. No doubt it was a daunting task, but my *karma* pushed me in that direction.

We thought of a different *Pallavi* for GANJAM Odissi. It was a *bhajan* item to rise in crescendo, Ramli initially was not sure but Dr. Pathy insisted to include this in *Pallavi*. The song that was used was composed by the famous Dasakathi guru Pandit Baidyanath Sharma- "*Bhaja Rama name pada bara bara kari dhyanakara mudha manasare*" O stupid mind, utter the name of Rama again and again. I searched for a folkish song to support the *Pallavi* that would strike a different note. But when dancing steps and body movements were added to the *bhajan* it gave feeling of spiritual abundance. At Istana Budaya Auditorium, an NRI spectator who enjoyed this piece tremendously, opined that he witnessed a refined Dasakathi, not an Odissi. I took his comments with a pinch of salt, The song and music was recorded on my mobile phone from Ramakrushan Padhi who acted as *Palia* (accompaniment) in Dasakathi. I had to take recourse to such a device because I had a conviction that the singers and musicians of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack would be unable to imitate Dasakathi *bhajan* songs of Ganjam. I was not an admirer of Gajaria Odissi, rather the unhewn raw rural Odia songs and their styles inspire me and I did smell Odissi in these renderings. According to Bharata Muni *rasa* stems from food and delicious food inspires delicate *rasa*. In Ganjam, *khiri* (payas prepared out of milk, rice, sugar and other spices) is served at the beginning of a meal where as in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar the recipe is served at the end of the meal. Whatever may be the process, the *rasa* strikes your mind and heart at the first instance.

I had always admired and respected a person called Mahamedhanadanath Sarasvati. I had misunderstood him or probably rightly understood him as someone of Shankarachaya or Ramanuja order. He gave me ample inputs for the Yogini dance composition that I had choreographed in 1994. That was *Dasamahavidya*. But I had never mentioned him on the credit page of the brochure thinking that the *slokas* might have belonged to some ancient epic compositions. My friends from whom I sought help backtracked. I felt helpless. I don't remember how I gathered my courage, and fell back upon the following *sabdas*.

Kali Kankali Naramundamali
dumu dumu sabade kampai Vetali

Jhata jhata Ugratara Simadi
Matangi Chandika Tripura
Pham pham pham pham phani garajana
Gham gham gham gham sabada Simbhavahana.

I am quite aware of Ramli's taste. I was confident that such syllables will receive due recognition from him. I confess I was short of time to implement Dr. Pathy's idea to get back to the primary sources. Perhaps with his ideas the composition might have been still better. I was transformed into a sort of possessed person and Ramli and Dr. Pathy were literally breathing GANJAM.

After the formulation *sabdas* for the Yoginis, I went searching for *ukkuta* for Shiva, Shiva is on his abode in the Himalayas. He is seated along with Parvati. A desire to dance stirs Him. He begins dancing with a slow tempo, then the steps accentuate, movements become faster, vigorous. Yoginis imitate Him and also start dancing.

I started the *ukkuta* with 'dha'.... 'ta'.... I went to Banamali Maharana for I had problems to proceed further. He refined my initial attempts. It became a long drumming tune like a war dance of Ganjam Dasakathi. It accommodated various dance forms such as Navadurga Nata, Ghudiki, Dhangada Dhangidi, Mangala Kumbha and Pilakhai Dahani. Later I realized its impact on Malaysian spectators, who clapped excitedly when Yoginis emerged and danced on the stage. I have overheard them saying "GANJAM is very powerful".

Dr. Parthy and Ramli were so overwhelmed with this piece that this resulted in a new term Yogini-Moksha. In fact it was the climax when Yoginis manifested in millions and billions of forms, shapes, colours and smells and filled the earth with their excited roars and left the earth blood drenched. Nothing better and suitable could have been imagined.

My intention was not to beat my our drum. I would not have ventured into such an untrodden path had my long time collaborator, highly sensitive and acclaimed dancer and director Ramli Ibrahim not put me into the track and Dr. Dinanath Pathy not given me much desired academic and artistic support. When his immaculate drawings transformed and transported into digital sights designed by the astute Sivarajah of Sutra and danced with Yoginis like legendry "phallic and fire" (to quote Ramesh P. Panigrahi), I realized that dance was not just "feminine and graceful", it was in fact "energy, and energy" tamed and made to fashion a diamond studded jewellery.

I am reminded of my guru Debaprasad who used to say "Hot..... every aspect hot, percussion, songs, dance, all have to be hot in synchronised tune and temper."

(Translated bySoubhagya Pathy)

My Experience as an Assistant to the Artistic Director of GANJAM

Divya Nair

Our intense involvement with GANJAM started in March 2015, six months before Sutra staged GANJAM at the Istana Budaya, Kuala Lumpur. Guru Gajendra Panda had come to Kuala Lumpur to conceive the works that were to be presented in this major production. Master Ramli had always commissioned Odissi dances that were bound to be give an impact and we presumed that previous discussion on the direction of the works had already been discussed. We expected nothing more but something beautiful, wonderful and unique with this collaboration.

Geethika and I, therefore, had a challenging task – that is, to ensure that Guruji's compositions will be carried out and that Sutra's legacy will be sustained by this new production. The process of consuming, digesting and then dishing them out again to the rest of the dancers required complete concentration and patience. In the long run the experience was extremely humbling and educational.

Guruji has an undisputable knowledge through his direct experience with folk dances and their contribution to the vocabulary of Odissi. He was from the district of *Ganjam*, which was rich with folk culture and this made him even more able to inject the new repertoire with rich folk elements. It was a new and exciting experience for Geethika and I as many of the *bols* and verses didn't sound like the ones in our regular odissi repertoire. It was an extremely challenging process as Guruji himself had gotten used to the regular classical odissi manner of composing dance and perhaps had lost a little bit of touch with his folk background. He had to push himself to recollect and remind himself of the concept behind these new works and with some push he was able to re-invent himself through his recollections which is richly embedded in his subconscious. Master Ramli was encouraging whenever a new idea, be in music or movement, that Guruji had freshly conceived. Guruji made the required tweaks and transformation and the new movements not only sounded fantastic but authentic. Understandably towards the end of the week, Guruji was almost at the point of exhaustion and he seemed to run out of idea and creativity to complete all of the items. Fortunately, we completed 70% of the major composition by the end of the two weeks. Both Dr Dinanath Pathy and Master Ramli were always there to prod and encourage Guruji whenever he completed a section. With this major part somewhat in sync, we were satisfied that the direction, which combined the beauty and dynamism of *Ganjam* were represented in the production. What more, we knew that with more rehearsal and re-arrangement for the complex staging at Istana Budaya, the inimitable 'Sutra factor' could also be incorporated.

The next time we met was in June 2015. Geethika and I had both stayed back with master in Bhubaneswar for three days after a short India tour where Sutra staged 'Krishna, Love Re-invented'. Dr. Dinanath watched the progress of what

had been created and we rehearsed with the musicians. I will not forget the moments Dr. Dinanath passionately explained the history of *Ganjam* district as he too was brought up in *Ganjam* and familiar with the folk forms. The detailed explanation gave us a clearer insight and allowed us to further enrich our imaginations for our own commitment for the production. Being new to undertake the responsibility of helping with the artistic direction, the information given by Dr. Dinanath provided us with vital base, as it helped serve as a guide for us to present our input and teach the repertoires to the Sutra dancers, within the concept of the production.

The next hurdle that Geethika and I encountered was to transfer all these information to the performers. Unlike previous major productions in Sutra, we explored the possibility of working with inexperienced performers, but not only were they inexperienced, it was the most diverse type of bodies we had to work with. The years of experience of dancing they had varied from more than 15 years to less than a year of Odissi training, it was the most exhausting and most demanding period of time Geethika and I had experienced in our years of being with Sutra. We had to ensure the essence of the folk element in the movements were preserved, the comprehension of devotion and commitment to put up a world class production was understood, and the complexity of presenting not only the culture of a district of another country but also the aesthetics and poetic spirits which were taken up seriously. The next two months leading up to the performance was proving to be a challenge that Geethika and I had foresaw.

Next we had limited time to rehearse with the full cast of musicians. Some of the seniors understood that we would have to quickly adapt to small changes in music, as it wouldn't be the same as the recorded music we had been practicing with, while some of the other new performers didn't. The musicians also lacked practice before they arrived and tensions were rising as time was running out but my colleague Geethika and I managed to rectify the mistakes and we moved on. Soon after came the coordinating of projections, lighting, stage movements, full dress rehearsals, all completed within a record time of less than two days.

Many in the audience who watched GANJAM either had watched an Odissi performance for the first time or GANJAM was their first ever dance production! Judging from the feedback we received, this novel and exciting production had an incredible impact. Not only that, we managed to cultivate interest towards the arts and specifically Odissi from the new audiences. I still remember vividly how it all felt so overwhelming, I couldn't help but wonder how Master accomplished it all these years, successfully pulling off one major production after another every year! The attempts of trying to get everyone of the collaborators from all the different components to work together were no easy task.

However, looking back at all of it, it was truly a special experience that only the lucky ones get to experience; to present a work based on a culture that is rich, authentic and dynamic; to collaborate with professionals in the fields; to be guided by two experts of Ganjam culture; to be under the wings of a maestro who provided us with the best instruments to work with, and to receive praises and positive feedback from the audience! GANJAM was truly the most wholesome experience I have been blessed with.

Illuminating GANJAM

Sivarajah Natarajan



Sivarajah Natarajan (Photo: Sutra Archives)

GANJAM, for me, is a total theatre. It represented the confluence of the contributing elements of choreography, dance talents, music, and the creative collaboration of designers of lights, multi-media and graphics. Even publicity played a part in the success of GANJAM! And we must not forget the technical and the administrative team. It was this potent collaboration among the various elements which contributed to the successful and happy end product. It was a challenge and a privilege to be part of GANJAM.

GANJAM, as I first imagined, represented the earthy energy and spirit that translated into dance movement and expression reflecting intimacy with nature and life's rituals. GANJAM evoked for me the warmness and amber colours of energy flow of folk and tribal essences.

Sutra had, as usual, a limited budget and one had to be very versatile and by sheer necessity, able to take on the responsibilities of many functions. This is how Sutra has been able to survive so far, both financially and artistically. In Sutra, my role usually encompasses the total concept of staging. I am usually the technical director doubling up as the lighting designer. Right from the beginning I multi-tasked, taking on these roles ever since I joined Sutra. For this

production, I also looked after the multi-media design. The total dramatic theatrical impact would depend on all these factors contributing to the effective staging of GANJAM.

Through watching the rehearsal process of GANJAM, I was able to understand the overall concept and artistic direction of the production. In addition, we had many technical discussions. The choreographic process and music, however, were important in pointing out the eventual directional focus of the work. In GANJAM, both Ramli and Gajendra were focused in exploring the folk and also tribal elements which contributed to the enrichment of the classical Odissi tradition, especially the Debaprasad style. The way the movement and choreography were being shaped as well as how the music was composed, informed the *rasa* that should accompany the staging. This understanding decided not only the lighting, but also the multi-media content and flow we engaged.

Being a painter, I have always approached my lighting concept with a painter's eye. I see this as an advantage because I am adventurous when using colours in my lighting. For example, in order to capture the right mood of the tribal and folk elements, I adopted the contrasting colours of amber and green.

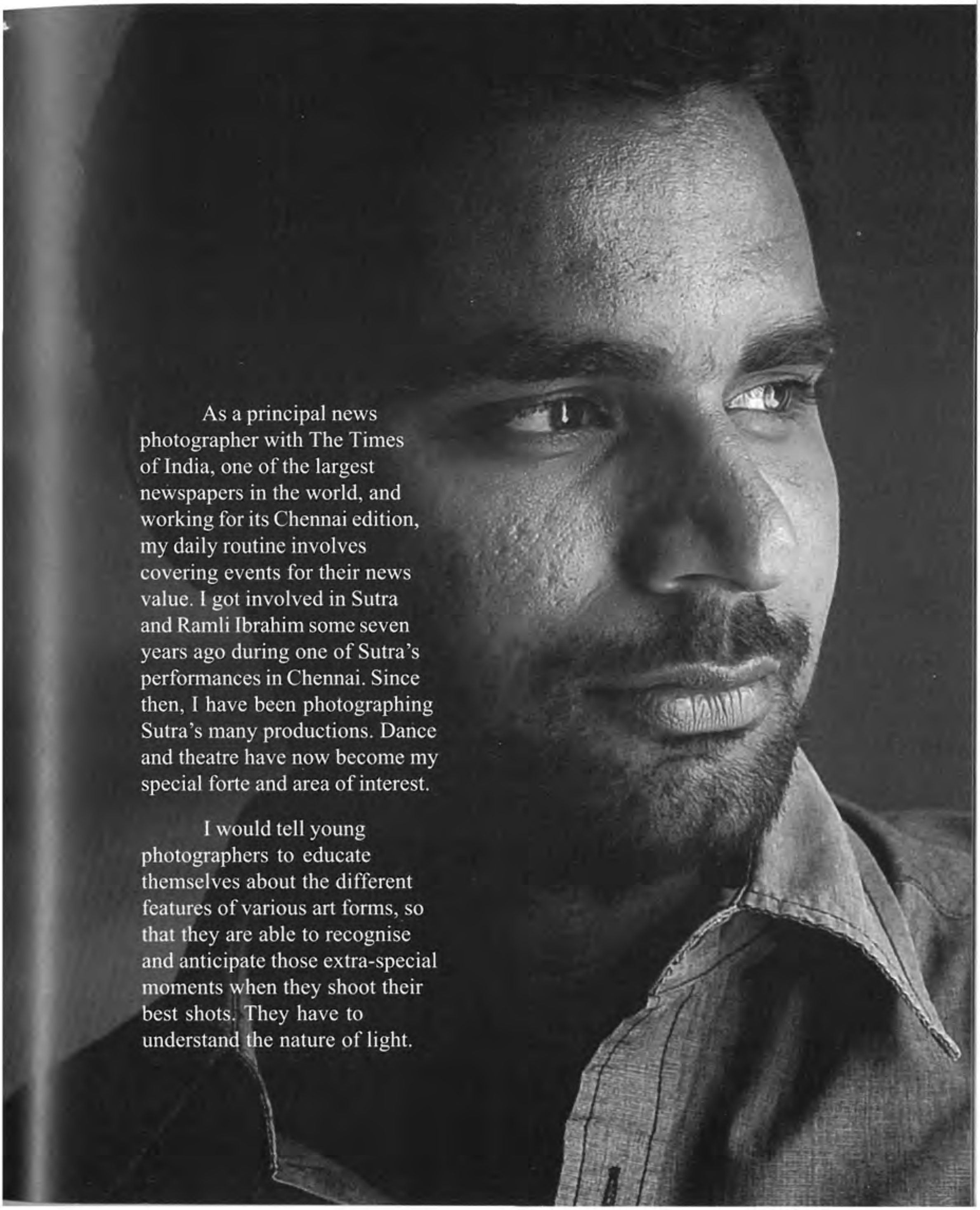
Due to budget constraints we decided to rely entirely on lighting and multi-media for the staging of GANJAM. Simultaneously, the sophistication of the Istana Budaya's technical facilities lent the use of multi-media more effectively than if we were to use cumbersome and expensive sets. In conceptualising the visual effect of the multi-media, I collaborated with Dr. Dinanath Pathy who is an authority on artistic matters of the Ganjam district. We were assisted by Abtin Javid, Sutra's resident graphic designer. With Abtin's technical presence, we were able to experiment on the visuals.

Working with Dr. Dinanath was a great experience. After all, he is a visual-art master whose extraordinary talents have created great impact in the contemporary evolution of modern visual and plastic art in Odisha. His passion and knowledge for Odissi is unique. What was incredible was that he was able to translate this visually and effortlessly. He was always positive and seemed to be without stress when he was working at Sutra. I admire his easy style when he worked with us.

He is an unique Renaissance Man of Odisha.

A Photographers' Response to GANJAM

A. Prathap



As a principal news photographer with The Times of India, one of the largest newspapers in the world, and working for its Chennai edition, my daily routine involves covering events for their news value. I got involved in Sutra and Ramli Ibrahim some seven years ago during one of Sutra's performances in Chennai. Since then, I have been photographing Sutra's many productions. Dance and theatre have now become my special forte and area of interest.

I would tell young photographers to educate themselves about the different features of various art forms, so that they are able to recognise and anticipate those extra-special moments when they shoot their best shots. They have to understand the nature of light.

Also, they should develop the quality of patience, and train themselves to get the best frame, from the perfect angle. That one photograph could change one's life. For example, for me, photographer Steve McCurry was a major influence. I simply love the way he composes his photographs. Who can forget his photo of the 'Afghan girl'? I would be happy to get just one photo that can define and 'speak' for all my works. And, McCurry has hundreds of photos like that.

Sutra's new book *Quintessential Sutra* was a challenging project. It entailed travelling to different cities in Malaysia, India, and US where Sutra was performing, meeting and interacting with people of different nationalities. This experience and exposure have contributed to my growth, both in a personal and professional sense. *Quintessential Sutra* was my first major book project, and as such, it challenged and inspired me to come up with the best — both in terms of ideas and execution. I am comfortable being with the Sutra dancers, and this is important when one is photographing candid situations. I feel part of the production team. I hope the creative journey continues.

However, photographing for dance performances requires a totally different frame (pun not intended) of mind. Though a performance may seem effortless, hundreds of hours of rigorous training and practice go into perfecting a movement. The same analogy can be applied to a photographer too; capturing the essence of a dancer or a performance requires patience and perseverance as one waits for the right moment to capture the mood, the soul of dancer, and the spirit of the dance. The image has to embody the essence of what one is looking for. This is not just about pressing the digital button indiscriminately. Art photography is as much an artistic preoccupation as creating art in any other media. One's creative decision and application of technique, understanding of light, and design, have to be informed and polished over countless hours of observation and experience.

Photographing GANJAM was a totally a different experience in many ways. The production was presented in one of Malaysia's best venues - Istana Budaya. The lighting was by Sivarajah Natarajan, who is one of Malaysia's best light and set designer. On top of that, GANJAM was artistically directed by Datuk Ramli Ibrahim in collaboration with Guru Gajendra Kumar Panda who brought out the authenticity of the work. And of course, Dr. Dinanath Pathy's sketches, which were transformed into magnificent background projections, help give GANJAM the dramatic multi-media stage-design that could take on any world stage.

Actually, performances look so easy on stage, but that's far from the truth. It takes much hard work and dedication for just those few minutes of beauty, grace and magic. I want to immortalise this ephemeral point of time, and capture that point of resonance of Dance and the dancer: of mood, light, and design; of body and spirit; of the dancers' dedication and love of the art. And then, share these special images with others. To me, this is when photography transcends mere documentation and becomes art.

What does Sutra Dance Theatre mean?

Alex Dea



I missed seeing the September 25, 2015 opening at the Istana Budaya grand stage in Kuala Lumpur of Ramli Ibrahim's Sutra Dance Theatre's GANJAM, but was able to come for the second night.

It was splendid and spectacular: from the wonderful choreography, use of the floor plan with dancers coming and going without break in timing, live music, lighting and excellent movement. It was enjoyable, and nothing for the performers to be ashamed at all, but I thought there were moments where spark was missed, that *bhava* – emotional touch — was broken. Perhaps, it was the typical gremlin of second-night-syndrome: On the opening night, one does well, perhaps beyond expectation because of nervous adrenalin and focus. On the following night, one expects the same. It is that self-consciousness which gets in the way.

I did see GANJAM a second time. I always try to see a work more than once – partially to enjoy it again, or in a more morbid attraction, to see why a dance appeared strange or bad. I want to be fair, give anything another chance. With Sutra Dance Theatre, it is never because I want to clarify why a dance was bad. It is always because I want to enjoy it again, to see more into the whole enjoyment or into deeper details of performing details.

In this last evening of the series, there was more flow of the individual dancers ensembling together. Therefore, there was more flow of the choreographic shifting of the groups and sub-groups of dancers, each shift giving more impetus for the whole work, step by step. This is most evident in the last *piece de resistance* where each level of energy increased until no more could be excepted for *Moksha* — spiritual release to the inner and outer universe.

One thing I really like about Sutra's work is the combination, synchronisation, and working together, the coming together of all elements of the visual dancer's body work, the floor plan – and in this case, the addition of the stage's capability of moving up, down, or sideways — the lights always smoothly

and elegantly shifting, keeping my eye engaged, and my mind refreshed. In fact, the mind is not aware. There is only enjoyment, like drinking clear water, or breathing fresh air.

The performance was continuously interesting, calling my focus to dancers in groups of three fours, four threes, of them becoming duets, soloists and duets suddenly, but smoothly, at the right timing, highlighted. My eye is "moved" by the crescendo and decrescendo of everything. Assemblage might be a good word to describe the coming together of elements in GANJAM.

In addition to this spectacle for the eyes, it was wonderful to have live music, especially some of the more notably famous musicians from Odisha, the native land of this dance. It is more expensive, and in Malaysia, it is not always affordable to bring Indian musicians. These days, with good sound systems of pre-recorded music, I (and perhaps, audiences) may have forgotten the aliveness of live music. Live music has revelations, but also risks. There could be timing and cueing problems. A musician might forget the exact text. But it is surely the risks which make the communication and communion between sound and movement which give the *rasa* which our soul wants.

Besides the lack of live music, lighting is another aspect of dance performances which often is short shrift. It might be insufficient (or no) time to work with the theatre lighting setup, or it could be the light designer not understanding the dance work, or simply lacking imagination. No problem for GANJAM, which had 200 or so lighting cues. That is a lot. And Sivarajah Natarajan was bold with color combinations (without being garish), quick lighting changes (without distracting), and with different sub-areas of lighting on the large stage of this Istana Budaya. For GANJAM, the many lighting cues are not the important thing. The importance is that the lighting sophistication did not get in the way; it did not overwhelm the dance, shouting out "I am clever, smart, and wonderful".

There was nuance and plenty of detailed beauty. The steel-blue tableaux in the distant mist became golden alive sculpture morphed into heavenly spirits. I love the imaginative and adroit use of green light on the blue costumes, making it appear to be emerald green. Then at the right moment, the blue costumes became blue again. This effect was smooth, without sudden surprise. The lighting was simply a visual festival, and a subconscious delight for the inner watcher. I recommend that other dance companies watch any performance by Sutra, if only for the lighting. There is much to see that it is not just a matter of side-lighting, clever sequences, or cool gobo. There is collaboration with the dance.

Some may say that lighting disguises the "line" of the dancer, but what does that really mean? That kind of concern for the "line" applies to individual dancer's body. GANJAM, is after all, an ensemble work (even though there are some duets and solos). The "line" is no longer on the details of an individual as it

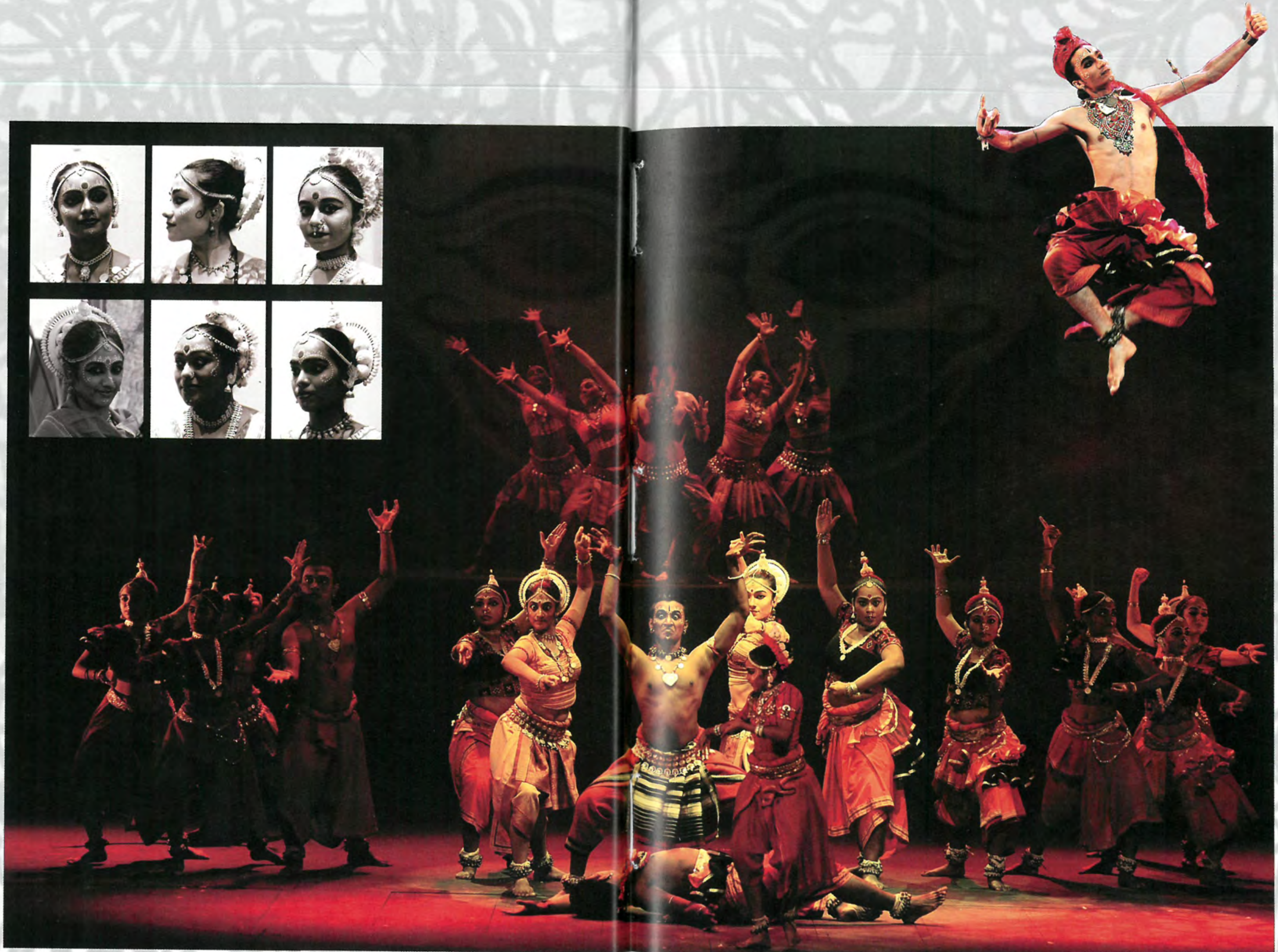




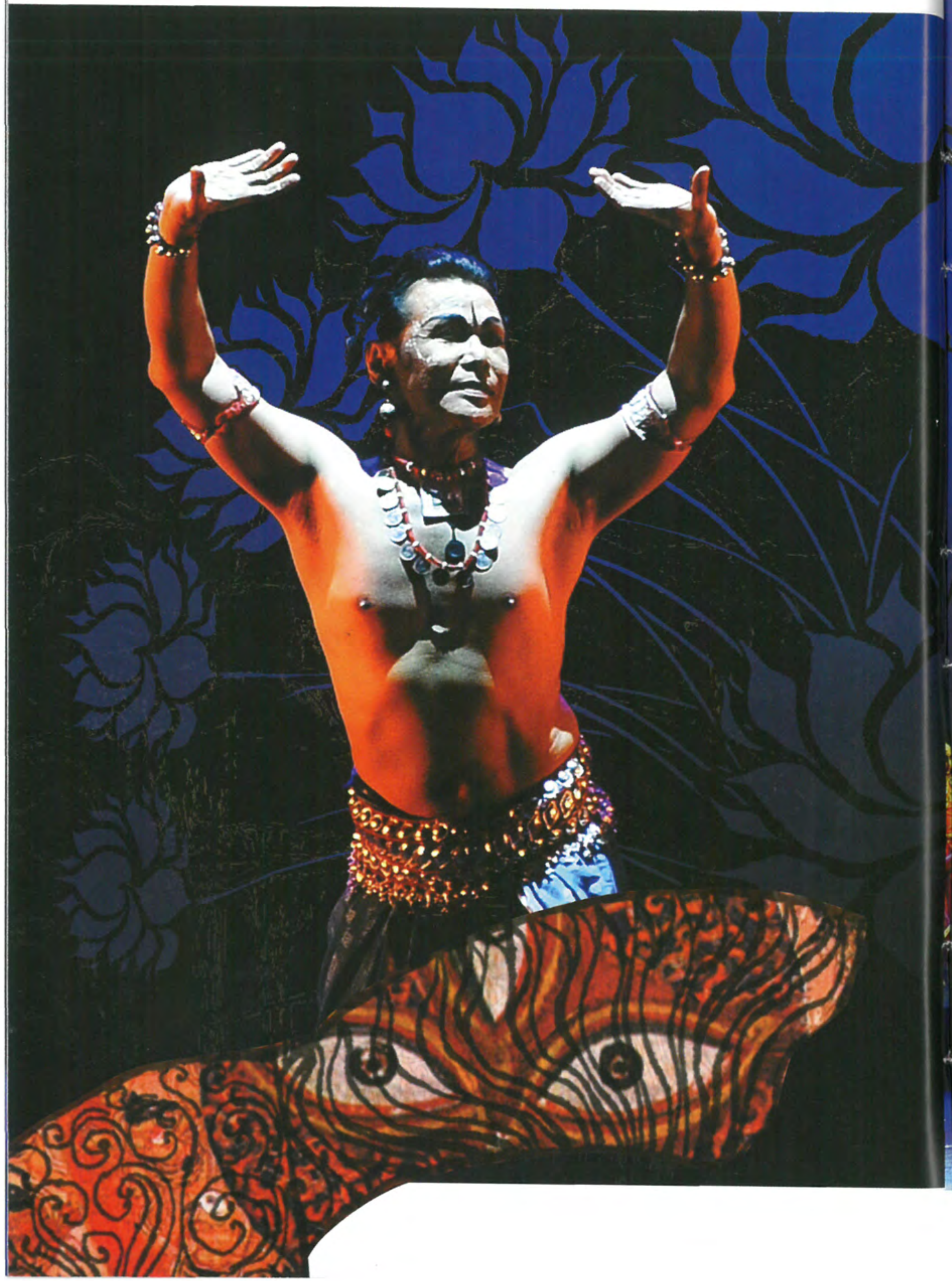
Rama Bhajan, *Sthai Nata*, Sutra dancers performing GANJAM Odissi
Kuala Lumpur 2015



Rama Bhajan, *Yogini*, *Nayaka Nayika*, Sutra dancers performing GANJAM Odissi, Kuala Lumpur 2015



Mangalacharana, Sutra dancers performing GANJAM Odissi
Kuala Lumpur 2015











Master Ramli Ibrahim and his disciples performing
GANJAM Odissi, Kuala Lumpur 2015



Ramli Ibrahim performing *Shiva Nataraja*, GANJAM Odissi
Kuala Lumpur 2015

would be in a long solo (like *arangetram* or ballet), but on the "line" of the choreographic floor plan and its moves from one shape to another.

There were two aspects which caught my attention.

I was charmed by the ten-year-old girl dancer. Without guile. Without self-consciousness. It is not because I am impressed by her youth. It is because she knows all the moves, the dance, without nervousness. No showing off. And importantly, without conceit (which could happen because she is by far the youngest and smallest of all the other dancers, some who are extremely expert). Her inner dance (and therefore, the outer) is not yet fully blossomed. But it's going to happen. I can only imagine (it's probably, hopefully, beyond my imagination and hope) what presence she is going to be in a few years.

Although she did not have the starring role, she certainly was in the center of lot of the action. Credit to Ramli and the choreographers certainly taking much care, attention, and thinking how to balance (1) the neophyte untested dancer, and (2) to maximize the potential.

The other aspect which caught my attention was the *Pallavi* which used one of the themes of the performance – of village/folk dance. The aspect of village dance, with its costumes and hats, the group-mass dancing together, repetitive movement sequences, and no fancy floor patterns, struck me as Pre-Bollywoodism. Whereas Bollywood dance seems like an extravagant joke, here it makes sense.

To conclude my observations on Sutra's GANJAM

The work and efforts of dancers outside of India who can reach this level of excellence is remarkable. Considering that the group was made of several age experiences, they were able to engage the audience as much as the high echelon of those disciplined, skilled, adventurous, and pioneering dance entities such as Nityagram and Chandraleka.

What makes Sutra special? By Sutra, I do not mean just the dancers, but the whole presentation and result of the combination of all the techniques of theatre, dance, music and related visuals. It is like a good sports team. There are star performers, but it is the whole working together – so that if one component may be having a bad day, the others compensate, flexibly readjusting — which brings success.

Sutra's success comes from what I mentioned previously: Assemble-age, and Ensemble-age.




Ramli Ibrahim in Conversation with Soubhagya Pathy

Soubhagya Pathy

1. Can you explain a little more about what an Odissi is compared to other forms of Indian classical dance?

Odissi originates from Odisha, a state situated in Eastern India. It is one of the eight Indian classical dance styles recognised in India. As dance, like music, is practiced as part of the ritual of worship, it grew and evolved with temple related activities. Odissi has an ancient history and archeological evidences in Odisha suggest that its origin goes back to more than 2000 years ago. However, the present concert format is a contemporary creation, which is only created in the last sixty years, was based on old dance texts, temple friezes and folk forms. Odissi is performed to its own music and has its own set aesthetic rules apart from of its own distinctive costume and jewelleries. Technically, it is characterised by the *chauka* (the square placement of legs and hands) and the *thribhanga* (the three deflections of the head, torso and hip) positions, which set Odissi apart from the rest of the other Indian classical styles.

2. What inspired you to base this odissi around the cultural rich district of Ganjam?

I have been going to the Ganjam district (south Odisha) for some time now and have participated in several workshops of the *sakhinata* (pre-puberty boys who perform Odissi in female attire) community. Two of my strong collaborators – Guru Gajendra Panda and Dr. Dinanath Pathy – are from Ganjam. Because of them, I am familiar with the theatre forms and the district. I visit it often enough. When I first experienced Ganjam, I felt a sense of *déjà vu* - that the region had a psychic connection with some villages of Bali, with which I am familiar. Of course, I found later that this is perfectly true.

3. When producing Odissi's, where does your inspiration for idea usually come from?

Ideas for dance may be stored in the mind until a ripe time when they can be fully acted upon and realised. The ideas can take inspiration from random encounters, objects, music etc. Right after GANJAM, I was involved immediately in the premiere of another work – *Amarushataka* (Amorous Delight)[1] – which was based on the palm leaf illustrations on the subject of love and its many facets. This was performed in Cuttack, Odisha in collaboration with a prominent Odissi choreographer-dancer, Meera Das.

4. How would you describe Ganjam, the Odissi production and what makes it different from your other productions?

GANJAM is one of our most complex productions. GANJAM, for those who are uninitiated to Sutra's long history with Odissi, may at first appear not just exhilarating, but also rather perplexing. This is because its content and context are not of the ordinary posed Indian dance. The works are an integration of dance and choreography with a compelling and sophisticated collage of various other dramatic and theatrical elements. GANJAM speaks of a different kind of dance-theatre: of the traditional yet seemingly contemporary; ethnic yet accessibly multi-racial. The elements of modernity within GANJAM, which on the onset appears to be a 'traditional' dance-theatre production, is very apparent. The works reflect the sensitive use of lights, sophisticated stage presentation, costuming – all of which are the essential elements of modern theatre, lending the production a global appeal and universality.

5. How long is the production and will you be dancing in it as well?

The total duration of GANJAM is about 1hr 30 min with an intermission of 15 mins. Yes, I shall be dancing as well.

6. Can you tell us a little more about the vigorous steppings of the demon king Hiranyakasipu and the pulsating declamation of Sabda Swara Pata of Prahallada Nataka. What is the legend behind this?

In the myth of *Dasavatar*, the ten incarnations of Vishnu, the latter was incarnated in the form of Nrusimha, Vishnu's Half-Man, Half-Lion *avatar* to restore righteousness. This myth is famously told in the the story of the cruel demon-king Hiranyakasipu and his son Prahallada, who was a devotee of Vishnu. Hiranyakasipu terrorized everyone including his own son. He had been given a boon that no human, nor animal shall be able to kill him; not anywhere in any room nor in open space, during day or night, can he be killed. Hiranyakashipu submitted his inflictions again and again to Prahallada but at the opportune time, which happened at twilight and when Prahllada was at the threshold of the palace entrance. At this right time, Hiranyakasipu kicks a pillar, which was 'neither inside nor outside' the palace. He demanded from Prahallada whom he was about to kill if Vishnu was truly present everywhere and if so, would Vishnu be able to save him now? The terrifying Nrusimha then emerged from the pillar to tear Hiranyakasipu to pieces, thus ending his rule of terror...

The steppings of the arrogant and cruel king Hiranyakasipu are referred and depicted in GANJAM to dramatic effect. Even, the ghagara which is a kind of multi-coloured skirt he traditionally wears, is implied in our costuming. The sabda, which are hallmarks of our Odissi style, is mnemonic syllables related to dance steppings and drum rhythms,. These are some of the folk elements, which are incorporated in GANJAM.

7. What are some of your favourite parts or highlights of this production?

Each work has its brilliant passages. GANJAM is full of these glorious and inspired passages, which I love. The main thrust of GANJAM is to put back the stirring and earthy elements found in the folk and tribal theatre idioms back again into the classical repertoire. This is important as classical systems tend to be stultified by the shackles of sanctimonious self-imposed rules. Classical forms sometimes forget that they need to touch base with the traditions which had once fed them...

8. What were some of the challenges when producing this Odissi and how was it overcome?

As GANJAM was a commissioned production, we had to start from the beginning. The challenges were to bring the various collaborative elements so that they augment each other in their eventual result and objectives. So, there are the artistic challenges of commissioning the songs and music, the costuming, training the dancers and later collaborating with the staging – the projections used and lighting later became crucially important. The world premiere was staged in a very sophisticated venue. I was lucky that the collaborative key leaders of GANJAM were on the same bandwidth. Guru Gajendra Panda and Dr. Dinanath Pathy who are both from Ganjam lent credence to the work unconditionally. Sivarajah Natarajan rose to the occasion as lighting designer and technical director. Divya Nair and Geethika Sree learnt the dances from Gajendra and then taught the movement to the others. Divya and Geethka kept them highly disciplined and motivated.

9. What do you hope viewers will gain from this production?

GANJAM is eventually not only a beautiful production but a great Malaysia-India bi-lateral cultural statement. This is something that Malaysians should be proud of. That the production will also be premiered in New Delhi and also later to Ganjam district, itself, in April, 2016, is a kind of Odissi Odyssey which is unique and awe-inspiring.

10. Ganjam premiered last year in September. What was some of the feedback from the show?

GANJAM was premiered as part of DIVERSECITY: International Kuala Lumpur Arts Festival 2015. GANJAM was one of the better-attended productions – the fact that we had a great one-week season at Istana Budaya, seven volumes of the production. We also had very good feedback from audiences and great press reviews.

11. How does Ganjam relate to individuals of various races and cultural backgrounds?

GANJAM, can be appreciated by anyone. It is both good entertainment and has substantial and relevant content. Good theatre can be appreciated by all from different cultural backgrounds.

12. Why did you decide to have a Malaysian and international tour?

A lot of effort has gone into the making of GANJAM. For Sutra, we generally tour our production from the point of view of reaching out to the maximum audience with our production – thus, the Malaysia and International tour. The experience should be accessible and shared with the rest of Malaysians and GANJAM is also an excellent vehicle to promote Malaysia.

13. Why are you passionate about the Sutra Foundation and what do you think it brings to Malaysia?

Sutra Foundation has contributed much to promote the liberal cultural policy of the nation. It is important that we 'walk the talk'. Sutra's cultural presence is a testament of the rich and diverse arts and culture that is practiced here in Malaysia. The presence of Sutra and other such institutions like it act as antidote to the current extremist and absolutist cultural views stemming from quarters which see our global society from the blinkered eye of a 'mono-culture'. Sutra Foundation does not just promote Indian culture but all forms of cultural expressions, which contribute towards the positive empowerment of the individual, community and nation.

Personal Questions

1. What inspired your passion for classical Indian dance and when did you begin dancing?

Dance is not just a profession for me but a calling. So, the word passion, (which is overused) is not quite the right description of my relationship with dance. Without it, my inner and outer psyches would not have resonated and amplified within me to give the creative and expressive range which I am blessed with. I remembered dancing as a mere child but only started formal dance training when I was a teenager.

2. How would you describe your personality?

As mentioned, I try to integrate not only the inner and outer landscape of my personality but also the anima (female) and animus (male), the *halus* and *keras*; the yin and yang – so that I can have a more holistic view of my personality through being in touch with who I am.

The Centre Was Out There in the South, in Ghumsar

Gaganendra Nath Dash



Seated portraits of Krushna Bhanja and Srikara Bhanja at Jayantigada temple (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1978)

'I would suggest rather, let them take a chasa[1] of Dacca and a chasa of Gumsar and see how much they understand of one another's talk.'

John Beames (Collector of Balasore in 1870)[2]

Beames made the above remark to disprove the contention that mutual intelligibility between Bengali and Odia is very high, as was claimed by Kantichandra Bhattacharya and supported by R.L. Mitra.[3] It was part of a larger thesis Beames put forward, that Odia was not merely a dialect of Bengali, as Mitra, Bhattacharya and others claimed, but an independent language. This was again in the context of a controversial debate on the question of introducing Bengali instead of Odia as the medium of instruction in schools in Odisha.

My main aim in referring to this remark and the context in which it was made is to show that, in the second half of the nineteenth century the language spoken in and around Ghumsar appeared to an outsider like Beames to be a specimen of the 'true' Odia language. Ghumsar was a small and former princely state in the south, which had been annexed to the British territory of the Madras Presidency and was therefore out of 'Odisha Proper', which consisted of the three coastal

districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore. However, it must also be emphasized here that Beames, who was then working on the northern frontier of Odisha, in Balasore, never had the occasion to visit any place, let alone Ghumsar, in the southern region of the Odia-speaking tracts when he made the above observation.

Although this observation might have been based, at least partially, on the public perception, it should not be dismissed as a casual and careless remark by an ordinary and not so knowledgeable British administrator. On the contrary, it was a well-considered opinion by a serious scholar. Beames was an Orientalist and philologist in his own right, who made this observation in all seriousness in a paper presented to a session of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, later to be published in the proceedings of the Society.[4] Furthermore, about two years later, in the first volume of his famous work, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India*, Beames was even more forthright when he stated, 'Oriya literature begins with Upendra Bhanja, who was a brother of the Raja of Gumsar, a petty hill-state in the south of Orissa, which even to the present day is celebrated as the home of *the purest form of the language*.'[5] Beames further noted: "It is said by the Oriyas themselves that the *language is spoken in its greatest purity* in the hill-state of Gumsar, the birthplace of the *first national poet*, Upendra Bhanja.'[6] Therefore Beames' opinion was based, at least to certain extent, on the public perception, 'said by the Oriyas themselves'. But Beames did not accept that opinion blindly and without careful consideration. He even tended to doubt the veracity of this view when in saying: "As, however, Gumsar is very far to the south, closely adjoining areas peopled by Dravidians and Kols, this assertion seems rather doubtful.'[7] But finally he came to the conclusion that 'The poems of Upendra Bhanja and his contemporaries are written in a language, which hardly differs in a single word or inflection from the vernacular of today, and every word of which is distinctly intelligible to the meanest laborer. These poems, written three hundred years ago, exhibit a perfectly settled modern language....'[8] In other words, to Beames, if not the language of Ghumsar, certainly the language used by Upendra Bhanja, the prince of Ghumsar, represented standard Odia or 'the purest form' of the speech. Therefore his opinion was not only based only on public perceptions but also on his own careful considerations.

At about the same time, in 1872, W. W. Hunter similarly regarded Upendra Bhanja, as 'the most eminent of all the Oriya poets',[9] a statement which also reflects the prestige and celebrity that Upendra Bhanja and Ghumsar enjoyed. Another British official, T. J. Maltby of the Madras Civil Service, also observed that "*The purest Uriya is spoken in Gumsur*, and north of Rushikulia river as owing to Bengali being the official language in Orissa, and its having a considerable affinity to Uriya, the latter seems to have assimilated to it more than to Telugu in the south.'[10] Moreover, in 1864, in one of his essays a Bengali intellectual, Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, who first came to Odisha in 1863 as a government official, had accorded Upendra Bhanja at any rate the second position among the celebrated poets of Odisha,[11] crediting him with fifty-two famous literary works. As in the

case of Beames, the opinions expressed by Hunter, Maltby and Rangalal appears to have been based both on public perceptions and on their own judgments.

It is not my intention either to accept or to examine critically the truth of the judgments of these four administrators-cum-scholars. What I want to emphasize is that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, to Odias, knowledgeable outsiders like Beames, Hunter and Maltby, and even Bengali intellectuals like Rangalal,[12] the linguistic and literary centre of the Odia-speaking tracts was in the south, in and around Ghumsar, beyond the then political boundaries of Odisha.

This high estimation of Ghumsar and Upendra Bhanja among the Odias in the second half of the nineteenth century seems to have existed continuously since the eighteenth century, the time of Upendra Bhanja (*circa* 1685–1735), the great late-medieval Odia poet. This is indirectly confirmed from another, rather unusual source, namely public interest in the Ghumsar Raj family, which manifests itself in a large number of *vamsavali pothi*s or family genealogies, both in Sanskrit and Odia (in Odia prose and verse), by different authors,[13] although the Rajas of Ghumsar reigned only until 1835. No such a large numbers of genealogical texts are known from any other Raj family of Odisha (including the Feudatory States), although these Rajas continued to reign until 1948–49. This is indicative of the high public esteem and importance of the Ghumsar Raj family.

II

In order to understand the rise of Ghumsar to this high position, we must go back more than three hundred years, to when Dhananjaya Bhanja *(circa* 1637–1701) was the Raja of Ghumsar. He set certain literary trends, which matured in the hands of his grandson Upendra Bhanja (*circa* 1685–1735) and made Ghumsar famous throughout the Odia-speaking tracts. In addition, Ghana Bhanja (1707–1754)[14] and Trivikrama Bhanja (1773–1780),[15] of the same Ghumsar Raj family, are also known for their important literary contributions. Suryamani Chyau Pattanayak (1773–1828), who translated the Sanskrit *Adhyatma Ramayana* into Odia and wrote *Ghumusar Bhanja Vamsavali*, also belonged to Ghumsar.

Dhananjaya has several works to his credit. He exhibited great interest and talent in writing long narrative *kavya* poems, divided into several cantos based on either *Puranic* (mythical) or imaginary stories. Besides *Raghunatha Bilasa*, the story of *Ramayana* in the form of a *kavya,* he wrote at least four more imaginary *kavya*s such as *Icchabati,* based partly on a folk tale, the *Tripuramohini, Madanamanjari* and *Anangarekha* and some songs. Dhananjaya's chief merit lies in his thematic and stylistic innovations in late medieval *kavya* literature. For the theme of his *kavyas*, he preferred imaginary stories[16] to mythological or *Puranic* ones and introduced rhetorical subtleties and eroticism into the realm of Odia narrative poetry. He allowed his imagination free play in using similes, metaphors and other figures of speech. For him, poetry was not merely to be read or recited but also to be sung, as was expected at princely courts in those days.[17] Therefore

these long narrative poems could very well be sung, as their cantos were written in different metrical arrangements or *chhanda*s, as they are called. This led to experimentation in the making of *chhanda*s. Because of this, the medieval Odia *kavya*s are known as *chhanda pothi*s or *chhanda* texts.

All these developments came to full maturity in the hands of Upendra Bhanja, Dhananjaya's grandson. Although Upendra's father Nilakantha was king for a short while after Dhananjaya was murdered in a palace conspiracy, Upendra was not destined to be a king and lived most of his adult life in exile, away from his kingdom. Nonetheless he became and remained the uncrowned king of the Odia literary world for more than a hundred and fifty years. He was the author of more than forty texts of different kinds, including a verse lexicon, a translation of *Purusottama Mahatmya* and a treatise on poetics.[18] As far as the themes of his *kavya*s are concerned, he had nothing really new to offer, but he was a 'master of rhetorical excellence' and 'knew intimately the Sanskrit rules of elegance'.[19] Moreover, he was extremely fond of playing on sounds, of which he was a master, and therefore developed an exceptional control over vocabulary items of every kind: *tatsama, tadbhava* and *desaja.* 'Sometimes he wrote poems with only vowel "a" added to consonants; at other times he retained a particular sound as the initial sound of each lines, even of the title, of a *kavya*.' For example, in *Baidehisha Bilasa* and *Subhadra Parinaya*, two of his *kavya*s, he retains the consonant sound 'b' and 's' respectively as the initial sound of each lines. Similarly in *Kalakautuka*, another of his *kavya*s, he retains the consonant sound 'k' at both the beginning and end of each line.[20] He was a learned man and showed off his learning at every opportunity. In one of his *kavya*s he even boasts that he 'has crossed the ocean of words'.[21] He was, in fact, a juggler of words. But, 'in spite of the innumerable lines of unequal merits, due to his constant attempt to play on sounds, and with words and show off his learning, a large number of passages contain poetical excellence fit to stand the fierce light of modern criticism'.[22] To quote Mayadhar Mansinha, 'It has to be admitted, however, that, in spite of the artificialities and all the pretentious pedantries, Upendra sweeps his readers off their feet by the deep subtle rhythm of the lines, by his superb metrical success and last, but not the least in importance, by the enchanted world of love, beauty and youth into which he ushers his readers or audience the moment his lines are sung or read. Unrivalled in the power of manipulating words most dexterously according to their own laws of beauty, unmatched in the art of painting sensuous, youthful love and unique in the total grand music of his lines, Upendra Bhanja dominates Odia poetry with an influence that has almost been totalitarian for nearly two centuries.'[23]

For at least a hundred and fifty years after him, most Odia poets fell more or less under his influence and tried to imitate his ornate, pedantic and even erotic court poetry and songs throughout the Odia-speaking tracts. Even those who attempted to move away from him and make innovations or experiments had to imitate him to start with, perhaps for their own legitimation as poets. As mentioned

earlier, Ghana Bhanja and Trivikrama Bhanja of the Ghumsar Raj family, following Dhananjaya, also wrote *kavya*s. Again, many of the most eminent Odia poets of the early nineteenth century, such as Kavisurya Baladeva Rath (1789–1845), Jadumani Mahapatra (1781–1866) and Gopalakrushna Pattanayak (1785–1862), were from the south of Odisha, where Ghumsar is situated. They too appear to have dominated the scene.[24] Besides them, there were a host of authors, both in Odia and Sanskrit, who belonged to southern Odisha, for whom Ghumsar and their princes were always a source of inspiration.

The late medieval Odia *kavya* literature became very popular among both the educated people and illiterates throughout Odisha. While only a few could read the palm-leaf manuscripts, innumerable copies of which were made, both the educated and the illiterates listened to them because of their musical qualities. In coastal Odisha, Odia *kavya* literature became popular through the media of *Pala* and *Dasakathia,* semi-theatrical musical performances, the *kavya*s of Upendra being immensely popular. The educated and the illiterate knew many *chhanda*s of his *kavya*s by heart, even though they always did not understand them properly. They were so popular that Utkalamani Gopabandhu wrote in August 1906, in a poem on Upendra Bhanja:

> 'Oh Upendra,
> Your lines are recited by the learned ones in assemblies,
> And sung by the travelers on the road during long and tedious trekking,
> By the peasants working in the fields,
> By the ladies within the confines of inner apartments of the households,
> And by the courtesans too, while dancing.'[25]

The popularity of this literature contributed to bringing about some kind of uniformity in the use of the Odia language, a development which had already begun with the Odia rendering of *Bhagavata* Purana by the saint-poet Jagannath Das in the sixteenth century, as Beames had already acknowledged indirectly.[26] Because of their popularity and prestige, the poets of southern Odisha, led by the prince of Ghumsar, deeply influenced the poets of other parts of Odisha. Thus, the impression gradually gained acceptance that the language of the southern area was the purest form of Odia.

Apart from this, Dhananjaya of Ghumsar may be credited with the pioneering attempt to write *chaupadi*[27] or Odissi songs, which nowadays often accompany Odissi dance. Of course some earlier attempts of writing such songs have been made. But they were numerically few and were mostly confined to Sanskrit plays written by Odia authors[28] or were referred to in Sanskrit treatises on music.[29] But it was only Dhananjaya who accorded an independence status to them.[30] Upendra Bhanja, closely following his grandfather, also showed exceptional talent and interest in composing a large number of such songs. Other poets-cum-composers of such songs from southern Odisha include Kishorachandra Rajendra and Krushnachandra Rajendra, kings of Chikiti, Dinabandhuraj Harichandan, the king

of Manjusha (Mandasa), Gobinda Rayaguru of Pittala and Jadumani Mahapatra.[31] This trend culminated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the works of Kavisurya Baladeva Rath, who was associated with several princely courts of southern Odisha and Gopalakrushna Pattanayak of Paralakhemandi.

A little more than half a century ago, the dance form today popularly known as Odissi dance took the important step of being 'reconstructed' by a fusion of two still living but distinct dance forms: *gotipua* dance[32] and the *mahari* (or *devadasi*) dance of the Jagannath Temple at Puri. Their synthesis was refined on the basis of some medieval Odishan dance treatise and temple sculpture of Odisha[33] in order to have it recognized as a *margi* (in the terminology of medieval texts) or classical dance form, a project very dear to Odia nationalists.[34] It appears that, instead of being a decadent or corrupted version of an originally *margi* or classical dance form, the *gotipua* dance was from the very beginning a *desi* or regional dance form from southern Odisha. It consisted mainly of two components: (i) *bandha* or *nritta*,[35] i.e. rhythmic dance accompanied by *bol* and *tala*, played on drum, and (ii) *abhinaya*, based on *chaupadi*s or Odissi songs that were strongly influenced by the Ghumsar tradition.[36] It contained no other components of what today is known as Odissi dance.[37] The very name Odissi also appears not to be very old.[38] The trend to trace artificially the origin of *gotipua* dance in temple sculptures, in the *mahari (devadasi)* dance of the Jagannath Temple[39] and in some medieval texts is also recent.

When female dancers were not available to dance in public places, especially in princely courts (the *mahari*s of the Jagannath Temple of Puri were a rare exception), male dancers, mostly adolescent boys, took their place and played the female roles. That is how the *gotipua* dance originated. In connection with the subject of this paper, it is worth mentioning that the adolescent boys used to be called *dakshini pila* ('the southern children'), which indicates that in former days the *gotipua* dancers used to come from southern Odisha. Moreover, the *gotipua* dance appears to be intimately related to the *Sakhinacha*, which was also prevalent in southern Odisha.[40] Thus it seems quite likely that both *Odissi* songs and *gotipua* dance originated in the princely courts of southern Odisha, and Ghumsar in particular, from where it spread to the whole of coastal Odisha, where it was much in demand during *Dola* and *Jhulana* festivals. In the course of this development Puri and its adjoining area became another centre of *gotipua* dance.[41]

As pointed out by Eberhard Fischer, illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts of outstanding artistic quality are generally found in the south, but rarely in the Puri area[42]. This is another indication of the rich cultural and artistic tradition of the south, which has, at least indirectly, a lot to do with literature, as illustrated by these palm-leaf manuscripts. It seems that works in the Odia *kavya* literature, such as the *Labanyavati*[43] and *Rasikaharavali* of Upendra Bhanja and the romantic *kavya*s of other poets of southern Odisha were a major source of inspiration for the production of such illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts.

The importance of the Ghumsar Raj family in the Odia literary and cultural traditions has now become well established and recognized. Thus Mansinha aptly observes: 'In the midst of murders, frauds, intrigues, and unspeakable immoralities, the ruling Bhanjas of Ghumsar kept up a living tradition of literary culture in the family.'[44] Gopabandhu too, at the end of the poem on Upendra Bhanja, already referred to, says that in the future Odias, especially those interested in literature, would regard Ghumsar as a holy place, a *tirtha*, and would pay homage to it. No wonder, for Beames and Hunter, as well as for Odia-speakers in general, that the linguistic, literary and cultural center of the Odia-speaking tracts was to be located in Ghumsar in the age of Upendra Bhanja.

Modern Odia literature had yet to emerge when Beames and Hunter made the above observations. But even after its emergence in the late nineteenth century, it still took a long time to be firmly established in the public mind and to compete with the prestige that Upendra Bhanja's works, and all those later works that came under his influence, had once enjoyed. As is known from the literary controversy of *Indradhanu vs. Bijuli* (The Rainbow vs. The Lightning)[45] in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the popularity of the Odia literature represented by Upendra Bhanja initially appears to have successfully withstood the challenge of the newly emerging Odia literature represented mainly by Radhanath Ray. At the height of the controversy, Radhanath himself, in a letter published in a periodical, admitted the poetic talent and greatness of Upendra Bhanja and even called him one of his poetic *gurus*,[46] after which the controversy gradually subsided. The debate, in fact, had started when a supporter of Radhanath vehemently attacked Upendra Bhanja and his works. Thus the supporters of Upendra Bhanja and the genre of literature he represented appear to have emerged victorious out of the controversy. But ironically though, since this controversy, and especially since the beginning of the twentieth century, the genre of literature Upendra Bhanja represented gradually lost its influence and ground to the emerging modern Odia literature, although it continues to have its admirers and imitators and to generate academic and scholarly interest.[47] It was certainly not just sheer coincidence that Gourishankar Ray, the celebrated editor of *Utkal Dipika*, actively and ardently supported Upendra Bhanja and the genre of literature he represented in the *Indradhanu* vs. *Bijuli* literary controversy and debate, because by that time he had already played a crucial and pivotal role in the Odia language agitation and in the construction of an Odia identity, the implications of which will be explained below.

Furthermore, it may be pointed out that, even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although the literary and cultural centre had shifted to central coastal Odisha, especially to the Cuttack-Puri region, the rich literary and scholarly heritage of southern Odisha did not just die out. Southern Odisha still produced a number of important scholars and literatures, which continued to make contributions to the culture of Odisha. This continuity, though in a somewhat less forceful and influential manner, indicates that once, and in the not too distant past, the literary and to a large extent also the cultural centre had indeed been located in southern Odisha.

III

The genre of literature Upendra Bhanja represented might have lost its force, influence and ground to modern Odia literature, but he continued to remain extremely popular among the common people. And what impresses most, apart from the musical quality of his poetry, is the way he played with sounds and words. Upendra Bhanja, like the sun temple of Konarka, gradually became a symbol of Odia pride and a marker of Odia identity.[48] This is partly because, to the Odias, the Bengalis, who were specifically seen as 'the political other' – Telugu- and Hindi-speakers, and even the British, were much less so – do not have any such medieval poet or temple to be proud of. Another reason for the continuous popularity of Upendra Bhanja is the musical aspects of his literary works. They are often sung in small or large gatherings, in radio and television broadcasts, and accompany Odissi dance performances. The popular admiration for Upendra Bhanja has found expression in a total of seven different plays on his life,[49] mostly based on traditional popular accounts. No other medieval or modern author or individual in Odisha has been honoured in such a way. Besides the host of literature that has gathered around the Bhanjas of Ghumsar, such as *Upendra Bhanja* (1895), a poem by Gopalaballav Das, the *Ghumsar Itihas* (1912) by Tarini Charan Rath or the *Ghumusar Kavya* (1936) by Chintamani Mahanty, the ordinary people were so much impressed with Upendra's skill of playing on sounds and words that a popular saying in verse was created, running as follows:[50]

> Raising both of his arms (in defiance) announces Upendra Bhanja,
> He does not count anybody as poet under the Sun.
> He only takes shelter at the feet of Jayadeva and Dinakrishna;[51]
> (But) he puts his left foot on the heads of other poets.[52]

The popularity of Upendra Bhanja finds expression even today in many different ways. Several literary organizations have been established throughout Odisha, with the aim of popularizing Upendra Bhanja and his literature.[53] At Berhampur, Bhanja Bihar, one of the several university campuses in Odisha is named after him. The only other individual who was, though much later, distinguished by such an honour is Fakir Mohan Senapati at Balasore. It is significant that, in competition with the *Rabindra Jayanti*, the week-long Tagore festival that used to be held by the Bengalis of Cuttack, *Bhanja Jayanti* or week-long Upendra Bhanja festival was started in Cuttack in 1944 by the ardent Odia nationalist and an admirer of Upendra Bhanja, Bichhanda Charan Pattanayak and continues to be held under the auspices of the literary organisation Kalinga Bharati.[54] It is significant that Bhanja Jayanti is also celebrated in the month of May. Whereas Tagore was born on May 7th, nothing is known about Upendra's birthday. But *Bhanja Jayanti* almost became a movement, and nowadays it is held throughout Odisha with much ceremony. Similarly, after an auditorium called Rabindra Mandap was constructed in Bhubaneswar during the celebrations of Tagore's centenary (1961), the name of another, already existing government auditorium was changed in the 1970s under public pressure from Kala Mandap to

Bhanja Kala Mandap. Similarly, a town in the former kingdom of Ghumsar, which was called Russelkonda during the British period, was renamed Bhanjanagar after independence. All this indicates that Ghumsar and Upendra Bhanja, its famous prince, not only formerly occupied a central position in the sphere of literature and culture, but also that they continue to occupy an important place in the public mind in present-day Odisha.

IV

From the time when Upendra dominated the Odia literary scene, Ghumsar also played significant roles in Odishan politics. Some of the available Ghumsar Raj *vamsavali*s maintain that Ramachandra II, the Raja of Khurda (1727–1736) and supposedly the successor to the Gajapati throne and as such the *adyasevaka* of Lord Jagannath at Puri, his queen, and his son and successor Birakesari (1737–1793) had something to do with Ghumsar, although the precise nature of this relationship remains unclear due the differences among the *vamsavali* texts.

In spite of the differences existing among them, a study of these *vamsavali* texts reveals that there are also many similarities which make it amply clear that Ghumsar and its monarch played an important role in the lives of Ramachandra Dev II, the Raja of Khurda, who became a Muslim, and of his queen and his son, Birakesari Dev.[55] Besides, there is some corroborative evidence to prove some of the claims contained in the *vamsavali* texts. First, Ghana Bhanja, the Raja of Ghumsar (1707–1754), in both of his *kavya*s (*Trailokyamohini* and *Rasanidhi*), held the title of *ksatriyabara*, which, according to the *vamsavali* texts, was conferred on him by the Raja of Khurda. Secondly, Ghana Bhanja established a Brahman *sasana* called Ksatriyabarapur near his capital of Kulada. Finally, one Brundaban Kuanar Guru Mahapatra, who is mentioned in the Ghumsar Raj *vamsavali*s, is also known from a bilingual copper-plate inscription which was issued by Birakesari Dev in his fifth Anka year. According to this inscription, Brundaban Kuanara Guru Mahapatra, the Parichha (*pariksa*) of the western door, had helped the *Mahasrama* (i.e. the Gajapati king) on his flight to Chakapadumal in Ghumsar and to Angul and was rewarded accordingly.[56] Moreover, Brundaban Kuanar Guru Mahapatra is also mentioned in the *Rajaboga* section of the *Madala Panji*.[57] From these corroborative evidences it is clear that the events recorded in the Ghumsar Raj *vamsavali*s are more or less based on historical facts. Ghumsar and its king played an important role in eighteenth-century Odishan politics, as he provided shelter to Ramachandra Dev II's queen and to Birakesari, and most likely also to Ramachandra II, the Gajapati of Odisha.

Occupation by the colonial powers was also not plain sailing. After the French invasion of 1757, the British invaded Ghumsar in 1768, 1778, 1799, 1801, 1815 and 1835.[58] Even after its annexation to British territory in 1835, its continued resistance to colonial administration required further military operations. The resistance offered by its people, especially the Konds, led by Dora Bisoyi and

then Chakra Bisoyi, gradually spread to other areas and was directly responsible for the annexation of the Kandhmal region of the Kingdom of Boud (1855–6)[59] and indirectly for the annexation of Angul in 1847.[60] In this connection it is worth mentioning that the Paik rebellion only broke out openly in Khurda in 1817 after a sizeable number of Konds from Ghumsar appeared on the scene.[61] After a gap of about half a century, in the later part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Odias of Ganjam, including Parlakhimedi and particularly Ghumsar, again played a significant role in the construction of an Odia identity. In 1870, for example, the very year when Beames made his observation quoted at the start, representatives of Odia-speakers in Ganjam held a large gathering or meeting in Russelkonda. In view of the their sorry plight in the Madras Presidency, they made an appeal to the Odias of the districts of Cuttack and Puri in the Bengal Presidency to make sincere efforts to bring all the Odia-speaking tracts under one administration, with Odia as the official language.[62] Even though this was not the first demand that had been made for the unification of the Odia-speaking tracts,[63] it was certainly the first time ever that such a demand was made in a large public gathering. It is significant that the gathering or meeting was held in Russelkonda (which was renamed Bhanjanagar after independence) in Ghumsar *taluk*.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, Upendra Bhanja has often been cited as a symbol or an icon the glorious past of the Odias, and especially of Odia literature. He became, at least indirectly, a source of inspiration for those who played leading roles in the construction of an Odia identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As pointed out earlier, Beames, Rangalal and other non-Odia administrators of the nineteenth century, in whose perception the linguistic and literary centre of the Odia-speaking tracts lay in Ghumsar, made very definite and positive contributions to the emergence of an Odia identity,[64] the imagined community of Odia-speakers.

In this connection, Gourishankar Ray in particular, the editor of *Utkal Dipika*, should be mentioned.[65] He was an admirer of Odia literature, especially of Upendra Bhanja and the genre of literature he represented, and he took an active interest in its publication.[66] As early as 1866, *Premasudhanidhi*, a *kavya* by Upendra Bhanja, was published by the Cuttack Printing Company over which Gourishankar Ray presided. This was the first 'medieval' literary Odia text to appear in printed form apart from a translation of *Gitagovinda* by Dharanidhar was published along with the original Sanskrit text in 1840. Between 1866 and 1875 as many as nine other works by Upendra Bhanja were published, some of them more than once, and in most cases edited by Gourishankar Ray.[67] Therefore, in the very early phase of the construction of an Odia identity, this prince of Ghumsar, 'the centre out there', played an important indirect role when, with the arrival of printing machines, his works were made available to a steady growing readership. They contributed to the emergence and consolidation of what Benedict Anderson calls a 'national print language'[68] in Odisha. Thus Gourishankar Ray took a major step,

which was followed by others, in making Upendra Bhanja popular among the people of Odisha and, finally, turning him into an icon of Odia identity.

At a still later period, in the first decades of twentieth century, Utkalamani ('the jewel of Utkal') Gopabandhu, along with his colleagues Pandit Nilakantha Das and Pandit Godabarish Mishra, the famous trio of the Satyabadi School and ardent nationalists, followed Gourishankar Ray in their admiration for Upendra Bhanja. Gopabandhu's much quoted lines in his poem on Upendra Bhanja have already been referred to.[69] In it he lamented that Ghumsar was beyond the then political boundaries of Odisha. This indicates how Ghumsar and Upendra Bhanja had become markers of the emerging Odia identity. Pandit Nilakantha Das also admired Upendra Bhanja and his literature, but for a slightly different reason. According to him, the literature of Upendra Bhanja was a reflection of true Odia culture.[70] Following him, nationalist critics of Odia literature admired Upendra Bhanja and his literature not for purely literary reasons, but for nationalistic ones as well. Pandit Godabarish Mishra, who was also a poet, admired Upendra Bhanja and his poetic talent, as is known from one of his poems on Upendra.[71] But Upendra Bhanja was certainly also a source of inspiration for Mishra's political activities. Another ardent admirer of Upendra Bhanja was Bichhanda Charan Pattanayak, who, as mentioned earlier, increased Upendra's popularity through the Bhanja Jayanti celebration.

V

It can therefore be claimed that, from a linguistic and literary point of view, Ghumsar was the most important of a number of centres in the Odia-speaking tracts, prior to and during the early modern period. As the 'centre out there' in the south, it had a strong impact on the emergence of an Odia identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But recent events – such as establishing the political as well as literary and cultural capitals in central coastal Odisha in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, as well as the histories written by some of our colonial masters and then by Odia nationalists mostly from central Odisha – have successfully clouded our perception to such an extent that it is often mistakenly taken for granted that the literary and cultural centre has always been located in central Odisha, around Cuttack and Puri. The rediscovery of the 'southern centre out there' is therefore now long overdue.

Space, Cultural Politics and the *Ganjam* ingrained in Dharakote

A Historical Report on Kalingan Culture

Ramesh P. Panigrahi

Space is a new category of postcolonial discourse and its rejuvenation as a critical concept begins with a movement away from thinking space in abstract theoretical terms such as centre, and by implication, a range of associated dyads. Dharakote (19-40'N/ 85-86'E) is a microcosmopolis under Khidingahara vishaya of Dharmaraja of the Sailodbhava dynasty ruling in Kangoda (c.553-725) as identified from the Nibina copperplate.



Dharakote palace complex

Khidingahara vishaya was included later in South Toshali, Kangoda under the Bhaumakaras(c. 736-950). The copper grant of Subhakar Deva-III of 839A.D. states that a village called Gujjata (in Dharakota vishaya) was gifted to a brahmin. Gujjata is identified by Dr. Bimal Prasad Patanyaka who has been awarded a Ph.D. degree for his research on the history of Dharakota as the present Gunduribadi village.

The Bhaumakara rule was debilitated around 900 A.D. and Bhimasena Deva (a Naga-vamsi king who ruled between 900 and 936A.D.) of Khindiri sringa mandala declared himself as *Maharajahdhiraj* by conquering Dharakota. With him starts the legacy of the rule of Nala dynasty in Dharakote estate.The detailed account of Bhimasena Deva (900-936) is recorded in Pandiapathara copper grant. The grant states:

Om swasti.Bhimapurat bhagavatascharachara guroh sakala sasanka sekhara dharasya sthiti-vityutpatti-pralaya karana hetoh sri yamalingeswara bhattarakya charanakamala dhanavapta punya nichayah svasaktistraya purushairanuranjita. Sesha samanta chakra sva bhujabala parakramakanta sakala khindir sringa mandala rajye parama mahewaro mata pitru padanudhyata nala vamsodbhava kula kamalankadhara bhuto

maharajadhiraja parameswara sri bhimaena devah kushali……"(quoted in Mishra G.S., *Ganjam Itihasa Parikrama*, Pp.231-32)

The Chhapali Saranauti copper grant, preserved in Odisha Museum, records that Prithvi Bhanjadeo, Ripu Dhavala and Narendra Dhavala ruled over Kindiri sringa after Bhimasena (900-936). A Madras Museum copper grant received from the collector, Ganjam in 1916 (edited by Dinesh Chanda Sarkar) mentions that a person named Sada (they spelled it as "Seda") has purchased a village named Tadeswara which was under Narendra Dhavala, the emperor of Khindiri sringa Mandala. The grant also mentions that the village was purchased in the 10th Century and Ranaka Ghonghaka(a Naga-vamshi chieftain was one of the feudatory chiefs under Narendra Dhavala) stood as a witness.

Khindiri sringa Mandala ruled by the kings of Nala dynasty in the 10th century was constituted of estates(small kingdoms) like Sanakhemundi, Seragada, Badagada, Sorada (earlier known as *Sruvida*), Dharakota and Baliguda (now a sub-division in Baudh district). Satyanarayan Rajguru's *Odisha Itihasa* (Part-1) informs that the empire of the Nala dynasty was surrounded by the Bhanja kindom in the north and that of the Svetaka Gangas in the south (who were defeated and dominated by the Bhaumakaras later).

Khindira Sringa was one of the 18 mandalas brought into accession by the Bhaumakaras. Dharakota came under the *Gomunda mandala*. Some others read it as *Momunda mandala*. The present Mundamarai situated two kilometers away from Dharakote is the Tamil name of *Go/Mo –munda mandala*. It is only a kilo meter away from the Dharakote bridge constructed in 1891. The capital of Go/Mo-munda mandala was *Dharanimpha*, read by some historians as *Dharanimba* ('Pha' is pronounced in Tamil as 'Ba') and yet read by some others as *Dharanai*. Dharakote feudatory estate was governed by the Tamil officers of Madras Presidency during the colonial period.

I strolled through this ancient micro-cosmopolis as a child in the early 1950s, when I studied in Sri Rajah's High school (established in 1896, by king Madanamohan Singh Deo, 1884-1937. The school was inaugurated by Mr. Neil Mc.Michael, the then Collector of Ganjam). You can see the map of Dharakote on P-67 of Dinanath Pathy's book captioned *Art: Regional Traditions:The Temple of Jagannatha* (2001, New Delhi) I grew up in this small town with a population of 12,500, constituted of Telugu diaspora, Marathi Barad families having studied the Ayurvedic science although Dharakote had a dispensary built by the Madras Presidency. There was a doctor who passed L.M.P. from Dhaka, Bangladesh. There was Ananda Panigrahi from Kothari Street, who was trained as a pharmacist, and was called a "compounder."

There were Telugu *Dari* (some of them were engaged as *Devadasis* in the famous Jagannath temple of Dharakote. There are 190 Jagannatha temples in South Odisha ; Ref: P-5,Dinanath Pathy, *Art: Regional Traditions: Jagannatha Temple*,

Sundeep Prakashan, New Delhi, 2001,) families, who were either mostly shop-owners, or some of their women were shakta Saints, Tantra *Sadkikas* taking care of the women folk (around fifty) boarding in the palatial harem.

The Kumuti families were also Telugu diaspora who owed their religious belief to these Tantra *Sadhikas*. They have totally merged now with the Odia communities dropping their "*inti peru*" (house-name) etc. These women folk who were not allowed to marry according to their family customs (since they were shakta practitioners leading a saintly life) live now like the ordinary householders.

There were 22 *agraharas* on the other side of river Rishikulya in which Brahmins from other states came and settled. They were Vedic scholars, Pundits in astrology, and specialists in *Samkhya, Nyaya, yoga, Karmakanda, Vyakarana* and *Sahitya* etc. Occasional literary meetings, poetry reading sessions and discussions on Bharata, Abhinavagupta and Sanskrit poetics were conducted in the Durbar hall of the palace. I visited those sessions as a child of 4/5 years around 1948-49 with my father Radhamohan Panigrahi (1905-1976) since he was a famous lyricist having written around one thousand songs. Tarini charana Patra, the classical Vina player of All India Radio, Cuttack (it functioned from Calcutta in those days) had opened a Music school at Boirani (the present Kavisurya Nagar) and he used to visit my father at our house for getting lyrics written by him. Radhamohan also had written three plays : *Dhruba, Viswabasu, Ramakrishna* (based on the life of Paramahamsa) and the plays were staged by Brajaraj Natya Sangha, Dharakote in the 1930s. There was a permanent stage in *Pata Agana, main courtyard* and every year a play was staged. Poornachand Devi of Dharakote had worked as a lead artist in Janata Theatre, Cuttack for about 15 years, and then acted in all the films produced from Utkala Chalachtra Pratisthana, Aska. *Dasyu Ratnakara* directed by Prabhat Mukherjee was shot at the palace court yard of Dharakote.Sarat Pujari was the hero and Prasant Nanda was a 10/12 years old boy.

The palace *pata-agana* (the main court yard) was the best performing ground for most of the folk art teams of Ganjam. I have watched the Sakhinata performed by teams of Raghunath Purohit(Ranajhali), Banchhanidhi Behera(Mathura), Banchhanidhi Bishoyi(Dengapadara), Baidhara Sahu(Barida), Simanchala Mandala, Sudama Rana,and Ramesh Mandala of (Sundarapura), Gobinda Sahu(Duana palli), Nilakantha Tarai(Bhatakumurada), Sudarsana Dalei and Surendra kumar Sahu (Kankorada), Bhimasena Behera and Ramakrishna Nayak(Duana palli) Yudhisthira Nahaka(Mati-garh), Kalucharana Sahu (Gudiali) and Biswanath Nayaka of Saha pur. The Rasikas of the 1950s used to gift currency notes (mostly 5-rupee and occasionally 10 rupee notes) to those boy dancers, dressed in female costume. They put on artificial breasts made of cloth and cotton and behaved naughtily titillating the conservative audience of Dharakote. However, they sang Riti poetry based on Sringara and the gurus harped on achieving the perfection.

The audience included pundits from the other side of the river, from the agrahara villages. A special boatman engaged by the king brought them. They were fed sumptuously in the palace kitchen and few gun-men and guards with gas lights led the Brahmin pundits to the Rishikulya river ghat. The river ghat was also a place for Tantrik practices. There was an *aghori* saint in Sati Matha, on the bank where a very big lamp containing aound three liters of ghee burnt perennially.

There were a few Muslim families too. But they worshipped the Hindu goddess Malalaxmi in the month of *Magasira* (December-January) along with their lower-caste Hindu neighbours. Maguni Khan, who drove the bullock carts and *jhatka* (cart driven by one horse) on hire for local transportation believed that the goddess of wealth visits the houses of the untouchables on Thursday mornings.

There were professional gun-men, who fought during foreign invasion and during the peace time, took to hunting sport. These hunters kept their guns ready and stuffed them with gunpowder every morning. The *dafadar* was the head of the village watchmen and he inspected the houses of the gun-men to check whether they whet their ammunitions and keep themselves in readiness to fight a war in case there is a foreign invasion. They accompanied the king and the visiting British officers in their hunting expeditions to the forest. The English men came to Dharakote to inspect the revenue accounts and to collect the rent from the king. Dharakote was governed by Madras Estate Land Act, 1908.

Two coal-filled steam-engine driven buses plied through the bazaar street of Dharakote, where we had three houses. Dharakote was the route through which buses from Berhampur and Aska wheeled toward Sorada and Badagada. Petrol driven buses were introduced in 1955 when the Odisha Road Transport Company was started at Berhampur. That was the first transport company of Odisha. Cuttack, Puri and Balasore districts were under Culcutta Predidency. These were flood prone districts and we used to send donation to them when these areas were hit by flood.

I was a three-year old boy and one day I watched at Dharakote a big procession with a number of spirited dancing groups- dancers with horse masks, and dancers with king and queen-masks. When the procession passed through our palace street, Dharakote, I thought someone from the Royal family got married. I asked my grandmother who they were and why were they dancing. Grand Ma' informed, "India attained her independence". My grand Ma'Rekhamani Panigrahi (1887-1953) was an educated woman who read puranas loudly. I remember she had a Telugu old lady (Ajanu Amma) as her best friend. Ajanu Amma treated me as a grandson, loved me, gave me home-made *apadalu, papad* to eat. She would dictate a letter in Odia and I used to write it on post cards. A Telugu young man from Majhi sahi was the postman. He could read Odia.

My granny Rekhamani's(1857-1953)husband Patitapabana Panigrahi (1882-1942) was not a vaishnava, and hence did not get any appointment in the Dharakote temples or in the Mathas (monasteries) as a professional priest. The kings of Nala dynasty were vaishnava and they had constructed 12 mathas (monasteries where Lord Srikrishna was worshipped) Hindi speaking priests from north India were appointed as the heads of those mathas.

My grandfather, Patitapabana was a *shakta* Brahmin worshipping a goddess Banadurga at home. He went to Burma from Mansurkota (Gopalpur) port in 1912. The ticket from Gopalpur to Rangoon was Rs.15/-. Entugulla Veera Swamy's born.1780 {Travelogue written in Tamil,translated into Telugu and then into English informs that there were six ports in Ganjam: Ganjam, Mansurkota,Sunapur,Pundi, Baruva and Kalingapattanam. Veera Swamy started from Chennapatna on 18-5-1830 and went to Kasi through Ganjam by foot. He was in Manikapatana on the bank of Chilika lake on 28/6/1831(Tues day)}. My grandfather was working in the north-west part of Burma which was known as *Ukkala* in those days.(P.P.Mishra, "Contact between Orissa and South East Asia in ancient times", *Journal of Orissa History, Vol-1, No.2. Sambalpur, 1980,* P-17). He was staying in the settlement known as "Mons". The inhabitants were also known as *Talaings*, immigrants who came from Telengana. I don't remember whether my grandparents spoke Telugu. But our family history records that we were Brahmins of *Bharadwaja gotra* and we came to Kangoda with the Swetaka Gangas from the south. The Mandalas 2-7 of *Rik Veda*, called *Kula Mandala* mentions about Rishi Bharadwaja (Thaneswar Sarmah,*The Bharadwajas in Ancient India*,1991 Motilal B.D.,p xxiii). The Bharadwajas were known for their war-like quality.

Their reference in *Go-Sukta*, (also the use of *ghrita* and the cows) are ascribed to Bharadwaja Barhaspatya (cf.P-215). In south Odisha these Bharadwaja gotras are known as *halua*(connected with the bullocks and tilling of land) Brahmins. We also belonged to the *Angirasa Pravara* of Bharadwaja gotra and the *angirasas* worshipped the cows (Sarmah,P217) They were also connected with the magic science of *Atharva Veda*. Patitapavana Panigrahi (1882-1942) was a worshipper of Bana Durga and probably he was trained in such practices from his association with the Telengana people. My grand mother knew the art/science of worshiping the goddess.

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Then, one day, on the 1st of June, in 1953, the gas lights were not lit on the shops of bazaar street, and Dharakote was dark. My seniors from *Majhi sahi,* the middle street of Dharakote informed that the king of Dharakote will hereafter amalgamate with Odisha along with other 26 feudatory states. Padmanabha Singh Deo, who ruled Dharakote as the king, could not resist the "historical forces" and he felt that since "the wave of democracy" came rolling down on him" the feudatory state called Dharakote was liquidated. In other states there were *Praja*

Andolan and people clamoured to capture power. Nabakrishna Chowdhury was the Revenue Minister under Harekishna Mahatab's leadership. Dharakote was integrated with Odisha.

The king then went to Bombay for business and two films were produced in the samc year –in 1953. Two Odia films were produced from Dharakote- *Janmastami(1953)* and *Kamsa(1954)*. There was no theatre hall for projection of the film. We listened to the music records released by H.M.V Company on gramophones. The field publicity department, Bhubaneswar showed us the film *Harischandra* on a 16mm projector in front of the ground at the palace gate five years later. In 1958, the Utkala Chalachitra Pratisthan was established in Aska, a suburban town 8 kilometers away from Dharakote, by Kaviraj Krishna Chandra Tripathy (and a film captioned *Sri Sri Mahalakshmi Puja* wa produced. Tarini Patra,(b.1930) a tall and beautiful actress from Dharakote, who was acting in Janata Theatres, Cuttack became a film star after acting in *Mahalakshmi Puja*.

My ideas of theatrical performance sprouted between the Sulia Hills (the eastern ghat mountain range spreading up to Baliguda of Kondhmals) and river Rishikulya. I culled my sense of percussion, rhythm and music from the wide wild waterfall that washed the holy feet of yogini Pataleswari on the foot of Sulia hills. The hill is a part of 200 kilometers long mountain filled mostly with dense mango forest,named Dahani. Sulia mountain taught us many things. It taught me that we can learn and it taught us that we can change. The Dharakote of the post-feudatory and post colonial (early 1950s) was different. The milieu of the Kalingan performing arts was charged with new enthusiasm.

Around fifty potters lived on the margin of the bazaar street and they supplied the earthen pots for the famous Jagannatha Temple of Dharakote. We had 12 monasteries (vaishnavite mathas) in Dharakote garh: Bada matha, Sana matha, Banavasa matha,Sati Matha,Radhakrishna matha, Gounikia matha, Tapswi matha, Hadu Matha, Chaitanya matha, Brijmohan matha, Gundichabadi matha and Nrusimha matha.. Rajah Madan mohan Singh Deo(1884-1937) was a vaishnavite and was a disciple of Mahanta Madhav Das. He had donated a village called Brajasundarpur to his guru. The king of Dharakote had established 22 *agrahara* villages *(sasanas)* inviting Brahmins from different parts of the country: from Kanyakubja, from north India and from the south.

Besides, Dharakote was a seat of shaivism since Narendra Dhavala (935-960) constructed Dhavaleswara temple at Singipur. In addition to this, the Mukteswar temple of Govardhanpur, the Mahalingeswara Temple, the Swapneswar Tample, the Bisweswar Temple of the palace, the Balukswar Temple on the bank of river Rishikulya,, the Vaidyanath Temples of Narayanapur and Tillottama dei pur, Sri Loknath temple of Jagannathapur, the Gangadhar Temple of Sindurapalli, the Neelakantheswara Temple of Panchasinghapur, Kapileswar Temple Rayasinghapur, Garudeswar Temple of Panibandha, Siddheswara Temple of Balisira, Uttareswar temple Pitalo, Bramheswara temple of Tarasingi, the famous Chandrakalpeswara

Temple of Gangapur are the surrounding shiva Temples of Dharakote. As minor school students, we used to visit eight temples (*ashta-sambhu darshan*) on the days of Kartika full moon day and on Shivaratri night.

The Kanaka Durga, Kothari(Chandika), and Pataleswari shakta temples of Dharkote,kings of Dharakote, godess Balamani of Narayanapur, the Dakhina Kalika temples at Kulagada and Tilottamadeipur, Ghoda Dei of Bethuara, Patra-patrani of Talaput, the Kalua temple of Panibandha and the Durga temple on the peak of Sulia forest evidences the tantrik practices.

The potters of Dhgarakote were excellent harmonium players and percussionists. Flutists joined from other streets and the Telugu clarionet and trumpet players joined them. They used to hold regular music rehearsal sessions in their *akhada ghar*, a house demarcated for rehearsing musical plays for the local Dandanata team. We had excellent classical singers in the village who worked as singers in Janata Theatre, Cuttack. Besides, the king Brajaraj Singhdeo had organized Brajaraj Dramatic Club (1918-1925).

When Siddheswara Parida of Kanakapur obscenified the contents and characters of *Mahabharata* because of his Sahaja yana Buddhist interpretation of Srikrishna , Gopinath Nanda and Mrutyunjaya Ratha from Parlakhemandi protested against Parida's putrid devolutions and called the work as a consequence of '*durvirya*"(impure pedigree of Siddheswara). Around after 200 years Krishna Singh, the king of Dharakote (1729-1788) translated the Sanskrit Mahabharata and published it from his own press established at Dharakote. The press was donated to Kabichandra Kalicharana Patanayak and it was transported to Puri in bullock carts. Kalicharan brought out a magazine on Odissi music with the help of this press from Puri.

Chintamoni Mohanty's *kavya* on Dharakote may appear now as the description of an imaginary landscape; but Gopabandhu Das's memories of Rishikulya and Dharakote agraharas reflected in his *Bandira Atmakatha* cannot be ignored since its geographical space is disadvantageous. I use Dharakote here as a privileged space, as a positivistic conception of geography to mean a series of points concerning the importance of paying attention to a culture's geographical provenance. Raymond Williams conceives culture as a set of structures deriving from the land.

I live today in a cultural space where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in a highly asymmetrical relation of domination and subordination. Bhubaneswar is the container space of materiality, a space in which peoples geographically and historically separated came into contact and evidence a philosophical instability. Hence, I intended to rejuvenate Dharakote, my native town as a historical site of relevant socio-cultural reality.

Role of Ganjam in the Formation of New Odisha

Basant Kumar Panda


Rama Chandra Mardaraj, King of Khalikote


Krishna Chandra Gajapati, King of Paralakhemandi

The family congregation that was organised at the summer palace in the small town of Rambha by the lake of Chilika to celebrate the second birth anniversary of Prince Ramachandra turned out to be the eventful occasion which eventually saw the emergence of a new Orissa. The day was 13th January in the year 1902. The celebrities who were in the congregation comprised Barrister Madhusudan Das, the king of Mayurbhanj Sri Ramachandra Bhanjdeo, Poet Radhanath Ray, Writer Fakirmohan Senapati, Pandit Gadadhar Vidyabhushan, Parsuram Patra, Balarama Maharana and Narasimha Das among others. They enjoyed the royal hospitality of the Khallikote king Harihara Mardaraj, blessed the little prince and resolved unanimously to form a National Conference under the chairmanship of Madhusudan Das and unitedly worked for the formation of a separate Orissa state. This incident led to the first Ganjam National Conference at the Berhampur town which saw the significant presence of, besides Madhusudan Das, Biswanath Kar, Lexicographer Gopal Chandra Praharaj, Moharior Sri Ramachandra Dash and great social worker Gopabandhu Das. Earlier Madhusudan had tried in vain to pass a resolution in the Burdhman Congress Conference to bring together Oriya speaking tracts and form a separate Orissa State. He resigned in frustration and the Ganjam Conference filled in his heart a new venture to realise his dream. By his suggestion Ganjam National Conference was converted to Utkal Sammilani. However, Harihara Mardaraj and Nilamani Vidyaratna were the founding fathers and prime movers. Till the end of his life in 1909, Harihara Mardaraj remained

a great supporter of the movement connected with the formation of Orissa into a separate state and made Rambha a centre of political and cultural revolution. Gopabandhu Das was so inspired by the selflessness and sacrifice of Harihara Mardaraj that he composed a song in praise of Ganjam.

Glory to the people of Ganjam and all Oriyas.
Glory to your striving, Glory to your courage.
You have shown your commitment and power.
Your unwavering devotion to mother tongue and motherland.
You have proved your national spirit.
The son of Utkal (Orissa) will always sing your glory.

Ramachandra, the worthy son of Harihara was educated in Madras (Chennai) and took over the reins of Khallikote in 1921 and then on devoted his time for the formation of a separate state for Oriya speaking people. After Orissa came under the British administration in 1803, its territory was severely limited to three districts of Baleswar, Cuttack and Puri. Utkal Samilani made concentrated efforts to bring together Oriya-speaking regions into one fold. Lord Curzon who was an admirer of Orissa's cultural herige was sympathetic to the views of the Utkal Conference. In 1905, native tracts such as Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Patna, Sonepur and Bamanda were ceded from the cenral province and joined with Orissa. But due to the resistance of the Madras Government, Ganjam and Jayapur could not join Orissa. Not bugged down by such failure, the Utkal Conference went ahead in their efforts. The efforts took the colour of people's movement at Khallikote in 1911 and in Balasore in 1912. In spite of such mass protests, Orissa was separated from Bengal Presidency and was united with Bihar and a new province was formed with Bihar and Orissa. This was a great blunder on the part of British government to club Bihar and Orissa together even if these two entities differed greatly in terms of language and culture. However, Madhusudan Das and Gajapati of Paralakhemandi gave a lot of support to keep the fire of the Utkal Conference ablaze. In 1917 Montagu Chelmsford Commission submitted to the British Parliament their proposal for carving out states laying emphasis on regional specialties.

In 1924, British government appointed C.L. Philip and A.C. Diff to elicit public opinion with regard to delimiting territories. Gajapati Krishnachandra Narayan Deb welcomed the commission and put forth his proposal boldly for amalgamation of Ganjam and Jayapur to Orissa. In 1928, in order to rectify Indian constitution, a commission was constituted under the chairmanship of John Simon. The whole of India rose against the proposal and greeted the commission with a rebuff "Go back Simon". But with a diplomatic twist Madhusudan Das welcomed the commission at Patna railway station and pressed the demand for creation of a separate Orissa state. Madhusudan's approach had positive effects. To discuss on Commission's Report, Round Table Conference was convened in 1931 in London. Krishnachandra Gajapati attended the conference and put forth his demands with convincing arguments. To give a final shape to the proceedings of the 1931 conference, in 1932 third Round Table Conference was again convened.

Ramachandra Mardaraj the king of Khallikote, represented the *zamindars* (kings) of south Orissa in this conference and could convince the British about the urgent need for formation of the separate state of Orissa. I quote below an extract of the speech he delivered at the Round Table Conference held in 1932.

"The Oriya language spoken in the four provinces covers an area of a little less than Yogoslovia and is spoken by people numbering a little more than the combined population of Norway and Sweden."

Because of this forceful argument, Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare made a special declaration about the formation of Orissa as a self-ruled state in the House of Commons. Highly pleased at the move, Krishnachandra Gajapati congratulated the British government with a telegramme.

Before this incident, the British government had formed a committee with Sir Samuel and O'Donnell to delimit the boundaries to form a separate Orissa State. Most unfortunately two significant principalities of Paralakhemandi and Jayapur were excluded from merger with Orissa State. This decision did upset the Oriya leaders and specifically Ramachandra Mardaraj. He expressed his mind in most precise words, "I feel the efforts made by my father as well as the leaders to form a separate Orissa state have gone in vain."

Had Lord Curzon earlier decided about defining the borders of separate Orissa state, this O'Donnell Report would not have dared dismembering the limbs of a greater Orissa.

But Ramachandra Mardaraj was not cowed down by the O'Donnell recommendation. He made a visit to London in the company of Bhubanananda Das, Lingaraj Panigrahi and his secretary Jagamohan Patnaik to again press the demand and he presented his views before the joint Parliamentary Committee. The Parliamentary Committee was pleased with their arguments and eventually agreed to the proposal. Delighted at the development Ramachandra hosted a dinner party in honour of Sir Samuel in London. To express his thankfulness, Ramachandra had said "I take this opportunity to thank his Majesty's Government, and particularly Sir Samuel Hoare for the great sympathy they have shown to the long neglected cause of the Oriyas by the recent declaration that Orissa shall be constituted a separate province."

In reply to Ramachandra's congratulatory note, Sir Samuel had said, "Two years ago when Raja of Paralakhemandi first came to put forth the cause of Oriyas to the British government in the Round Table Conference, very few people realised the importance of the subject. He impressed this importance upon us, and now in the past few weeks, the Raja of Khallikote has reinforced the arguments he advanced and convinced us that the time has come to reunite the Oriya population

in one administration and to give them once again the chance to develop on the distinct lines they followed as a people until the sixteenth century."

He went on heaping praises on the Raja of Khallikote and said, "I am happy to note that the efforts to form a separate province for Orissa of our host today has remained a family endeavour. His father was one of the leading Oriyas of our modern times who first raised this issue in the public. I have tremendous faith in the family tradition and the consistency with which the Raja Saheb has put forth his demand has pleased and overwhelmed me. A worthy son has come forward to fulfill the societal ambition of father with zeal and jest, nothing could be more endearing than this."

The work that was initiated by the father Raja Harihara at the second birth anniversary of his son was eventually taken up with sincerity and diligence by the son that led to the formation of a separate State for Orissa on the 1st day of April 1936. Of course by this time both Madhusudan Das and Gopabandhu Das had died, so also Raja Harihara since several years before them. Souls of the deceased must have felt delighted at this great event and showered rose petals on Ramachandra. The only hope, the towering personality Gajapati Krishnachandra did remain as the symbol of the separate state till his last.



A view of the historic Rambha palace in ruins (Photo: Jyoti Ranjan Swain)

Music and Dance Personalities of South Odisha

Sangita Gosain Mahapatra and Soubhagya Pathy



Bhubaneswar Mishra



Sanjukta Panigrahi

Gopalakrushna

In the songs of the trio of musical composers in Odisha, Gopalakrushna Pattanayak, the Radha-Krishna love, reaches the highest spiritual heights. Born in Paralakhemandi, south Odisha, in a well-to-do and cultured family, Gopalakrushna was a devout vaishnava. And he poured out his soul in unpremeditated songs, as a holy offering to his Lord. He was, in his lifetime, completely indifferent to his poetic creations. It is due only to the efforts of the poet's friends after his death that we are in possession of these precious products.

But though unconcerned with any recognition as a poet and apparently unplanned, we are now really surprised at the remarkable method in the poet's madness, in his poetic creations, as, in and through the confusion of his songs, we get a complete picture of his Lord from childhood to adolescence. Gopalakrushna is the one poet in the whole of ancient Odia literature, to sing enchantingly of the naughty childhood of Krishna. Then through our poet's many songs, we see Him grow, go out tending cattle into the distant forests, causing pitiful mental sufferings to his doting old mother Yashoda, passes through pre-adolescence and adolescence, till He gets the first tastes of romance in life. And all these flash out before us in a procession of exquisite miniature paintings in the songs of Gopalakrushna.

What distinguishes Gopalakrushna's songs from others, is the purity and sublimity of emotions, expressed in the most natural way, without any effort at mere ornamentation or deliberate effect. The moods and feelings are absolutely human, set in familiar situations of common Indian life. And Gopalakrushna is the only poet in Odia, who sings of the romance of Radha Krishna without any vulgarity.

Here are some illustrations

We almost hear the quickened heartbeats of the young bride Radha, in the following song, as she is undergoing the terrific mental agitation before leaving her home for the first men for a secret meeting with an extramarital lover. Says she to her confidante:

"Have you indeed given him an appointment? I do not know what will happen when I meet him. I tremble all over even now. I go about in the house in constant fear of detection, lest somebody come to guess the fearful throbbing of my heart. But, what was he about when you left him? What exactly have you told him, and what was his reply? I hope, you are not really deceiving me? Could you not go again and cancel this appointment? I am so terribly afraid of the consequences."

But the lovers meet at last and they meet again and again. The happiness of the consummation of their desires is expressed beautifully in many songs. In one such says Radha:

"Family and society have I given up gladly for the love of Krishna,
His love is indeed the one treasure of my life.
I am now a beggar, and he, my begging bowl,
I am an unknown wild flower, and he, its honeybee;
I shall be counting the rosary of his beauties and virtues for all eternity."

Then came also the usual fits of jealousy of lovers, and the determination to punish the erring partner. See, how love has transformed the little timid Radha of the earlier days into a bold, angry, woman, when she rebukes her Krishna:

"Don't touch me, Krishna,
Get away from here
Heed my protest, and behave not like a naughty boy,
This is not the place for your jokes, please,
My friends might know and taunt the life out of me for nothing!"

But the intense Radha soon rises above these petty human feelings. This grand sublimation of the little ego, making possible the emergence of the luminous lover in the unsophisticated village girl, that was Radha, rising above gross physical delights and the obsession of possession of the lover, is described enchantingly in many a song by Gopalakrushna. Here is one such:

"How can I take His unkindness to heart?

Am I any better than a humble servant-maid before Him? Would this Radha ever have also, any pleasure by wounding His feelings?

Rather would she wear herself out serving the woman who takes His fancy! I shall get all the treasures of the world, If He is just happy, even be it, with another woman, My one desire being to have one took only at His face, Just once a day, even from a distance!"

In another song also says Radha:

"Oh, let this scandal of Shyama be forever on my head, That I may pass my days with thoughts of Him and Him alone.

Whatever the folk might say, To me, if I but once look at His beauteous face, Sins of many births appear to be, just floating away!"

This is the grand finale to this apparently immoral, but in fact, a deeply allegorical and spiritual love story. In the hands of stupid mediocrities this story has become degraded with all sorts of vulgarities. In Odia, Gopalakrushna alone, out of a host of Vaishnavite poets, conveys the penetrating Truth behind this romance, in a charming, simple, spontaneous manner, caring little for mere verbal effects. But his songs are sweet all the same, favourites of dancers and singers all over Odisha, and still more of literary connoisseurs.

Bhubaneswar Mishra

A legend in the music and dance field of Odisha, Bhubaneswar Mishra will ever shine as a pole star in the firmament. He himself was the personification of *sura* and *tala.* He often expressed that he had two enemies in life, one was *besura* and the other was *betala.* His violin recital was technically superb, perfect and captivating with its *gayaki* style. Dedication, sincerity and love for music took him to the pinnacle of creativity. Though he maintained a low profile, his melodious creations brought him to the fore-front.

A calm, composed, handsome man with a loving and striking personality, he never made anybody know his personal miseries. A mentally retarded eldest son and the premature death of his most loving child, his youngest daughter shocked and shattered him. But it was 'music' which made him to gather himself and return back to Odisha from Mumbai and contribute immensely to Odissi music. Since 1985 he was with Odissi Research Centre, Bhubaneswar.

All India Radio, Cuttack and Mumbai were proud of him as music producer and composer. Having best training in all the three systems of music he could maintain a distinct style in his recitals and compositions. Melody is the prime

feature of his compositions. He created a series of melodious songs for the popular Odia films, Odissi dance dramas as well as documentaries and feature films.

While basking in the glory and popularity of Odissi dance, the dancers just forget the contribution of the man, who resurrected the soul of the dance form but keep on awarding the choreographer and the dance guru at the cost of the musician. Bhubaneswar Mishra has contributed significantly to the status acquired by Odissi dance today. Speak about any of the repertoire of Odissi dance, there is the touch of magic hand of Mishra. Some of his immortal creations breathe newness as before. To give an example, *Shankara Bharana Pallavi* is danced by dancers throughout the world, which has been the outcome of the rare combination of Bhubaneswar Mishra and Kelucharan Mahapatra. I had the opportunity of sitting along with the two stalwarts and watch them compose. No talk, no gossip, but internalisation of each other's ideas and visualisation. That is how their combination was unique and they created harmony and synchronization in true sense of the term.

Family pressure, tension gradually led to physical ailments: spondylitis, spinal problem and parkinsons. He could not walk properly, could not speak but with trembling hands on the harmonium and unclear expressions, he could create some unforgettable music for dance such as *bhairavipallavi, ragashripallavi* and *Sriramavandana* in *raga tilang*. His tunings of *Gitgovinda* is uncomparable which has now become the tradition.

In the year 1987, I had a chance to be a part of the team to Russia sponsored by ICCR in which Kelucharan Mahapatra, Bhubaneswar Mishra, Raghunath Panigrahi, Sanjukta Panigrahi, Kumkum Mohanty and some more dancers and musicians were the members of the group. At all the places we visited and performed the programmes were simply excellent. By that time Mishra's disease had already started and aggravated. But he never expressed the pain. Before the programmes he will have a Brufen of 400 power to keep himself fit for the show. Only his accompaniment in violin was more than enough. But after the programme he used to be very sick with numb hands and feet. In one place we saw him consulting a doctor in the hotel room in Russia. Brufen was becoming powerless and even two tablets would not last till the end of the programme. The doctor asked him if he could take injection. Gladly he said yes, and took an injection with a very thick needle and syringe used by vet. His determination and commitment to music is unparalleled.

His sincere efforts and thoughts have showed the way for expansion of Odissi Raga along with traditional songs without hampering its melodious quality. *Raga Maheswari* is his brainchild and a very captivating *Raga* too.

He lived for music. He was so involved and engrossed in making music that he could not do any other physical activity. When he was given a cup of tea during the rehearsals {when he was sick and could not talk properly) he could not

pick up the cup and properly hold it half way to his lips and could never take a sip until the music stopped.

Leaving all his melodies behind, he left this mortal world for eternal abode on 7th May 1993. But he remains in the hearts of dancers, musicians and music lovers for his music.

Sanjukta Panigrahi

Sanjukta Panigrahi was born on 24 August 1944 in a respectable and orthodox family at Behrampur, Ganjam, Odisha. She started learning dance at the age of four from Kelucharan Mahapatra. She performed for the first time outside Odisha at the annual festival of the Children's Little Theatre in Calcutta in 1953 and was awarded the First Prize in the International Children's Film Festival. The child prodigy cast a spell over the audience and was showered with rich compliments.

She arrived at Kalakshetra at the age of nine. Rukmini Devi could foresee her talent and genius in Sanjukta who was destined to be one among the icons of Indian classical dance. She was trained at Kalakshetra for six years and obtained *Nrityapraveena* in Bharatanatyam and Kathakali. She also obtained her diploma from Kala Vikash Kendra at Cuttack. Sanjukta along with Priyambada Mohanty and Minati Mishra, was the first Odia girl to enter the classical dance sphere and embrace Odissi as her career.

Sanjukta discovered her passion in the young voice of Raghunath. She fell in love. Sanjukta arrived in Bombay in 1960 to learn Kathak from Pundit Hazarilal. The same year she got married to Raghunath. She became mother at the age of seventeen and at the age of nineteen she had already been the mother of two children.

The couple returned to Odisha and Sanjukta joined as a dance lecturer in the recently formed Music College in Bhubaneswar. Raghunath had started singing for her since 1976.

Sanjukta's training in Bharatanatyam helped her see the originality and authenticity of Odissi dance. She took Odissi to all parts of the world, performed and demonstrated in every nook and corner and made it known outside Odisha. Sanjukta for the first time broke the barriers and experimented, choreographed and performed non-traditional, unconventional items in Odissi. She performed *Surdas Padavali,* Tagore songs, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* and *Sri Ramacharita Manasa,* Sanjukta as a female dancer presented *Sri Ramacharita Manasa* for the first time at Sankat Mochan Temple in Varanasi. Women were not allowed into the temple.

Apart from presenting Odissi performances in different parts of India, Sanjukta Panigrahi has been a part of Government of India's cultural delegation to different countries such as USA and Philippines in 1969, United Kingdom in

1983, Israel and Delphi International Festival in Greece in 1989. She performed several times at Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Switzerland, at the invitation of her friend, Dr. Eberhard Fischer, world-renowned anthropologist and the then Director of the Museum.

She enthralled the world audience with her performing intricacy, grace and beauty and had enhanced Odissi, then a neglected dance style, to the status equal to the other classical dance forms of India. She was a purist, perfectionist and basically a solo dancer. Her solos were choreographically rich, rapturous with sculptural poses emphasising her voluptuous curves, gestures and expressions. Her presentations on *Gitagovinda* were appealing, captivating, sensuous, flowing, and filled with ecstasy of high eroticism, sultry and sinuous steps and flirtatious glances with an inner spirit and seriousness. These were fascinating introductions to an unfamiliar dance style. The world fell in love and adored Sanjukta.

Sanjukta Panigrahi had founded ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology) with Eugenio Barba in 1980 in Copenhagen. Her Odissi performances illuminated Theatrum Mundi and filled the hearts of the spectators with power and beauty. Sanjukta explored every possibility and scope to enrich the sphere of Odissi through her rare intellect.

Kelucharan attained the legendary status through the vision and achievements of his pupil Sanjukta. Sanjukta had done for her guru Kelucharan what Indrani did for her guru Debaprasad. These gurus later became doyens through the success of their pupils.

Sanjukta had nurtured a dream to start a *gurukula* like Kalakshetra and share every experience that a dancer goes through to evolve. But her dream remained unfulfilled due to her untimely demise on 24 June 1997.



Lord Rama, the Cultural Icon of South Odisha

Sudarshan Acharya



Ramapattabhisheka, Coronation of Rama, stone panel, Jagannatha Temple, Dharakote
(Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1980)



A farmer sporting Hanuman tattoo, Kotinada village, Ganjam district, (Photo: Eberhard Fischer, 1980)

Rama and Krishna, the two divine characters have influenced Indian psyche as no other god-kings have done before and after them. Epics, stories, legends, poems, paintings, sculptures, temples and mathas connected with the life and activities of Rama abound the length and the breadth of the Indian sub-continent. These two figures have caught the creative imagination of poets, painters and performers alike and for several centuries their work have transformed the lives of people and the society. Specifically the *Ramayana* of Valmiki and the *Mahabharata* of Vyasa are two great literary works India has produced which are dear to the heart of people.

All the regions and states of India reflect the unique phenomena with varying emphasis either on Rama or Krisha. While Krishna's theatre of activity largely remained confined to the northern Indian peninsula through the Mahabharata war and his dalliance with gopies what is popularly known as *Gopoalila*, Rama, though born in Ayodhya, a north Indian town, essentially was a hero who made south India his field of activity.

Strangely enough, when we come to Odisha, we encounter a similar division of north and south, north attributed to Krishna and south to Rama. Here our main concern is to reason out Rama's influence on south Orissa. Two Vaishnava preachers who are basically responsible for such a division are Ramanuja and Chaitanya who visited Puri at different periods of time but left their indelible marks on the religious and social structure of Puri and Odisha. The temple of Puri and the royal patronage extended to Rama and Krishna served as a model. Nevertheless the regional pockets reacted to the patronage issue in their own way. Ramanuja travelled



Ramapattabhisheka, Coronation of Rama, Door Jamb and tympanum, Belaguntha town, Ganjam district (Photo: Dinanath Pathy, 1986)

from Madras and Chaitanya from Bengal and wherever they went Rama and Krishna temples sprang up.

Although Gaudiya-Vaishnava temples and mathas belonging to Chaitanya order co-exist with Rama temples in south Odisha, Chaitanya's influence on south Odisha is marginal. We find a number of temples and mathas belonging to Ramanuja or Ramananda order in south Odisha. The Viranchinarayana Temple in Buguda in the district of Ganjam is famous for its 19th century murals on the theme of the *Ramayana*. The other notable *Ramayana* wall painstings are in Kanchili and Sariapalli, the two bordering villages in Andhra Pradesh. The distinguished carved and painted wooden façade of the Sri Rama Swamy Temple in the village of Netanga near Bhanjanagar town is superb for its workmanship and artistry. Upendra Bhanja, one of the greatest medieval Odia poets belonging to Bhanjanagar (Ghumsar) wrote his famous *kavya, Vaidehisha Vilasa* with Rama as the hero, each stanza of the poem starting with letter 'va'. Painter Raghunath Prusti of Mundamarai Pentha has profusely illustrated V*aidehisha Vilasa* palm-leaf pothi.

In south Odisha, several translations of the *Ramayana* are available. People of south Odisha have preferences for *Ramayana* translated by the poets of their locality and region. Although Balarama Das's *Jagamohana Ramayana* (supposed to have been read to the devotees in the *Jagamohana* of the Puri Jagannatha Temple) is a standard text, in south Odisha people prefer Krishna Charan Patnaik's *Ramayana* instead. It seems south Odisha people lay emphasis on translations

which are more faithful to the original works. Therefore south Odisha presents a different picture which is a striking departure from what is normally appreciated in Puri and other northern districts of Odisha. It is no wonder therefore that the *Khadanga Bhagavata* is preferred to Jagannatha Das's *Bhagavata* and Krishna Singha's *Mahabharata* to Sarala Das's more popular work.

Even before the advent of Chaitanya at Puri, Odisha had its tradition of Krishna worship. Chaitanya influenced the administration to sway in his line and this was not without its ramifications which made the intelligensia averse to Chaitanya's intervention. As a result they were debarred from royal patronage. Later in the post-Chaitanya era, these scholars and intellectuals left Puri and settled at different courts belonging to small *zamindaris* (kingdoms) and principalities in south Odisha for security and patronage. It is because of the divide in patronage, one notices the emergence of *Rasakallola*, poetry saturated with intense Krishana *bhakti*, in the 17th century Puri, while as a counter production, one comes across *Srirama Vilasa*, a high styled poetry with the story of Rama at the Ghumsar court (present Bhanjanagar). However, one should not construe that Krishna as a literary theme was totally pushed out of south Odisha.

But at the same time, it is a fact that the kings and *zamindaras* of south Odisha did not come forth to embrace Goudiya Vaishnava faith in preference to the religion propogated by south Indian Saint-philosopher Ramanuja. As a result, while the royalty belonging to Ghumsar, Chikiti and Manjusha embraced Sri Vaishnavism of Ramanuja order, the kings of Jalantara, Jarada, Tikali and others promoted the worship of Rama. Therefore one encounters a majority of Vishnu or Raghunatha temples in the south Odishan villages and towns.

The influence of Sri-Vaishavism was so deep that in the *zamindaris* of Jalantara, Tarala, Jarada there are Jagannatha temples in which the principal deity is Narayana. In the town of Jarada specifically, the charioteer Krishna of the *Mahabharata* is worshipped as the main idol where as Jagannatha has been relegated to the position of a *parsvadevata* deity in the niche with a secondary position in the working of the faith.

South Odisha is littered with a number of Raghunatha temples. Might be, due to the royal patronage or the new faith generated among the commoners, these temples and *mathas* are rich and affluent. Some of these institutions even serve as cultural centres and a few of them are affiliated to Rama establishments at Ayodhya and Mathura. This has resulted in flow of *sadhus* and saints to south Odisha who have helped in the promotion of Rama literature.

It is almost a conclusive statement that the area stretching from the river Rishikulya to the forest Dandakaranya has a number of places dedicated to Rama. These are Malyavanta (Malkangiri); Chitrakuta (Chitrakonda) and Mahendra which also found mentioned in the *Ramayana*. One hears several legends connected with sacred places where Rama had established Shivalingas.

One can also consider the sense of intense love for the deeds of Rama which has led to creation of several folk songs, important being the songs connected with agricultural operations. A sample song is produced below:

> Lakshmana is a member of Rama's marriage procession.
> My black and white umbrellas are at the base of golden altar
> black and white umbrellas are covered with gold,
> bunches of pearl and studded with diamonds.
> three petalled crown for the marriage. Dress Sita soon,
> Let Lakshmana drive the chariot.
>
> (Chakradhar Mahapatra, *Utkal Gaunli Gita*)

A street performer Janughanta, who moves in the streets with a metal bell tied to his right thigh above the knee and enacts the scene of Rama meeting with Parsurama delivers dialogues in high pitch making the village ambinence virbrant. Ramalila, is a prominent folk theatre is south Odisha. This folk theatre has three forms; Ramalila, Ramanataka and Nrutyaramayana. While Ramalila projected aspects of lila theatre, Ramanataka displayed features of Prahallada Nataka and Nrutyaramayana is having highly musical features. With the help of small couplets like *Chaupadi*, performances communicated the Rama story with play of music. It is noteworthy to mention that three successive kings of Chikiti royal family; Krishna Chandra Rajendra, Pitamvara Rajendra and Visvambhara Rajendra have composed each a Ramalila. Critics opine that Vikram Narendra and Vaisya Sadashiva, the two other poets have also written Ramalilas. Along with them, the king of Huma, Vimvadhar and the resident of Paralakhemandi area Raghunath Parichha were the authors of two separate Ramalilas. Poet Krishna Dhivara's play and the king of Jarada's Rama Nataka are enacted even today. During Ramanavami to celebrate the birth of Rama, *lilas* and *natakas* are staged on each evening consecutively for nine days.

People of Vizag (Visakhapatna) now in Andhra Pradesh still remember the staging of Ramalila by the Maharaja of Jayapur. *Gitabandha kavya* (poetry sung to a music note) – *Raghunatha Vilasa* of Visvambhara Rajendra and *Nrutyramayana* of Keshava Patnaik belonging to Palur are two significant literary works. In this context one can also refer to *Raghunatha Kritana* of Narasimha Matha. All these literary compositions have promoted both literature and music in south Odisha.

Translations of the *Ramayana*:

Valmiki Ramayana has been rendered into Odia by several poets of south Odisha. These are Krushna Charan Patnaik's *Patnaik Ramayana*, Krushna Chandra Rajendra's *Arsha Ramayans*, Raghumani Mahapatra's *Raghumani Ramayana* and Ramachandra Chhotray's *Ramayana Ratnamala* which have significance in the annals of translated works. Apart from these, one fondly remembers the *Purna Ramayana* of Keshava Tripathy. He has given a new format to Balarama Das's

Ramayana through his work. He has gone ahead to create three more *kandas* (chapters) supplementing the existing seven which are designated as *Vibhakanda, Rahasakanda and Abhishekakanda.*

While not denigrating the importance of *Valmiki Ramayana*, emphasis has been given to *Adhyatma Ramayana* said to be the work of Vyasa. In this work Rama has been picturised as Vishnu who dwells in Vaikuntha and this is the new aspect of the work. Therefore *Adhyatma Ramayana* is dear to the heart of Rama devotees. This has inspired several other poets to compose works in the light of *Adhytatma Ramayana*. Most of the translators belong to south Odisha. *Ramabhakti Ratnavali* composed with selected extracts of *Adhyatma Ramayana* is a notable literary work. *Adhyatma Ramayana* has been rendered variously with titles having either of the original work or such other as *Rasarnava Ramayana.*

Still there are a few other *Ramayanas* which donot follow any of the earlier compositions but are resplendent as *kavya* poetry with a *navakshari* nine letterd format. These are the *Rama Rasamruta Sindhu* or *Sindhu Ramayana* of Kanhu Das, *Vira Ramachandra Vilasa* of Visvambhara Rajendra, *Janaki Vilasa* of Rama Das belonging to Sariapalli Matha now in Andhra Pradesh *Sitavilasa* of Keshava Das and Sri *Raghunatha Lilamruta* of Vishnava Ganga Rama.

Worship of Rama, devotion to Rama, translation of Rama literature from Sanskrit to Odia and above all, fascination for Rama stories and legends have gripped the psyche of south Odishan people for several centuries. Out of many poetry creations concerning Rama, a majority belong to south Odisha. Among them, the earliest one is attributed to the king of Ghumsar, Dhananjaya Bhanja who has composed *Srirama Vilasa*. As an alternative to Balarama Das's *Ramayana*, he created the *vilasa* which inspired later poets to follow in his footsteps.

If one takes into account the contribution of south Odisha to the evolution of Rama literature, one is amazed at the intensity of the commitment to the cause of spreading the message of Rama. This trend was active in the works of late 19 century and 20 century poets. Mention may be made of Padmanabha Narayana Deva's play, *Ahalyashyapa Vimochana*, Gopinath Nanda's *Janaki Parinaya*, Radhamohan Rajendra Deva's *Parimala Sahagamana*, Jagannatha Gouda's *Mahavira Parshurama* and *Lanka Darpana Nataka*, Nilakantha's *Sitaprema Tarangini*, Dayanidhi Das's *Bala Ramayana* and a lot other works.

Even today, the story of Rama has remained a vibrant stream of conscious creative activity among the poets, writers and performers of south Odisha. This short paper without having scope to delve deep into literary merits of the works, touches upon the significant contributions of south Odisha to Odishan culture and establishes Rama as a popular icon of south Odisha.

(Translated by Soubhagya Pathy)

The Ramayana Two Kalamkar Textiles

Eberhard Fischer and Dinanath Pathy



All the photographs by Eberhard Fischer

Kalamkars are hand painted (sometimes repeated parts also block-printed) and dyed cotton fabrics, mainly used as decorative wall hangings, tents, canopies, or covers. The technique to paint with a pen (in Persian *kalam)* was highly developed in Iran, Mughal India, Rajasthan, the Deccan, and along the Coromandal coast. Two of the finest specimens from the Indian subcontinent are kept in the collection of the Odisha State Museum.

More than half a century back, Mrs Sailabala Das, daughter of Madhusudan Das, presented these large textiles depicting scenes from the *Ramayana* to then Orissa Provincial Museum.[1] In her letter, dated 20 November 1951, addressed to the then minister of education, she writes that the lot of two pieces belong(ed) to the Puri Raja's family. The old queen of Puri gave it as a present to my father when he won the Jagannatha Temple case (for her). It was at that time the cloths were more than a century old and the lot was in my possession for the last fifty years. There is no reason to doubt that the two textiles were in the personal possession of Suryamani Patamahadei, the queen mother of Puri, and were a gift to Madhusudan Das on the occasion of his winning the famous temple-management law suit in December 1888, which confirmed her right to appoint the temple manager.

This provenance indicates that the two large textiles were in royal possession earlier and belonged to the raja of Puri's household and were not the property of the Jagannatha Temple. We have no information, when and from where, these two

precious textiles had come into the royal family's treasury, but it is likely that these pieces were brand new when they were brought to the Puri court as gifts, or tribute, by some highly placed pilgrim or ambassador. Since the inscriptions (dyed in the textiles) are in Telugu, and only additional labels are in Odia, it is likely that the place of production was in coastal Andhra, probably even south of the Godavari river. We are not sure about the function of the two textiles—they are supposed to have been used as 'elephant trapping'. This obviously is a possibility, even though they are different in size and no cut indicates such a use. That figurative textiles were used in the nineteenth century as trappings of chariots can be seen on water colours depicting the Jagannatha ratha in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. But it is more likely that these sumptuous textiles with the Ramabhisheka motif wall hangings or tents, demarcating a sacred and extraordinary space were possibly used on the occasion of the coronation of a king or on similar occasions. Their colours, left in good condition, prove that they were not constantly on display but folded away in chests and only taken out on rare occasions.

The two kalamkar textiles are similar in style, dense with witty details and thematic content, but not identical. In both we find that the rectangular textile is incomplete at the left side, where the border is attached since long. It is framed by block-printed ornamental borders. The narration starts with the battle of Lanka on the left and proceeds to the right, ending with the coronation of Rama. On the upper left, one sees Rama mounted on Hanuman engaged in battle with Ravana's valiant son, Indrajit, shooting arrows from his horse-drawn chariot bearing a wounded charioteer. On the battlefield, a vulture and a jackal approach the corpses of the demons and horses lying amid the torn canopy on the broken top of a chariot. On the lower plane Lakshmana is aiming his arrows against the magnificent demon, Kumbhakarna. Between them ensues a fierce struggle involving monkeys and demons. In the centre of the textile, the ten-headed Ravana attacks Rama—both fighting from large chariots. Ravana's horses are winged, suggesting that the demon-king's chariot can fly through the air. Rama's cart is much smaller than his opponent's. However, it is equipped with two rows of wheels. Behind Rama and on eye-level with him stands the dark-skinned loyal demon Vibhishana (as indicated by an inscription), his gesture made with his right hand, suggesting that he is giving advice. The expanse of the battlefield between the two heroes is large, filled on Rama's side with monkeys throwing rocks against their enemies and aiming at Ravana's three elephants which try to smash them under their feet. A small detail might be mentioned: At the bottom, under the feet of the approaching monkeys and bears, we find stylized hills.

The right portion of the textile is dedicated to Ramabhisheka, the coronation of Rama after winning the battle of Lanka. Rama is seated in the upper centre on a lion-throne with Sita by his side. A parasol is held over their heads by Lakshmana, the other two brothers wave cauri-yak-tail-fan and peacock-feather behind him. He is adorned with a folded book in his hand by Jambavan, the bear-shaped



advisor, possibly reading out a proclamation, while celestial beings with wings shower flowers from the heaven. Hanuman kneels on a pedestal at his master's feet. Behind him stand his loyal followers, led by Vibhishana, above them, seven rishis have assembled with Narada and an animal-faced being. At the bottom of the scene two monkeys are vigorously beating two kettle drums. There is a *yagna*-ceremony being performed by brahmins and women, cows and courtiers come with offerings, all in a joyous mood.

The second textile is devoid of inscriptions. Some portions are cut out and are stitched together to the larger portion where Rama's coronation scene commences. It strikes the viewer as a fantastic piece of high artistic value.

The rectangular textile is divided horizontally in two equally high registers, by a line. On the upper left we witness the battle of Indrajit riding a chariot with Rama carried on the shoulders of a gigantic Hanuman. There is a clash of their arrows. Indrajit is not wounded because he is invisible, depicted here amidst highly stylized clouds. But many others are killed in this murderous battle. In the second upper sequence, Rama is shooting .arrows from his chariot at Ravana's army of demons led by elephant warriors. The monkeys carry huge rocks and hurl these boulders at their enemies who fight to defend themselves with swords and shields. Many of them are already killed as are the horses of a broken chariot.

In the lower panel in the left corner we come across a disconsolate Sita sitting in the Ashoka garden, kept under the strict vigilance of a multitude of demonesses, who seem to express anger or hostility by their hand gestures and

faces. The slender trees with intricate branches, foliage, and flowers, the birds, and squirrels climbing up the trunk remind one of the Coromandal trade kalamkars.

In the subsequent sequence, Lakhmana is shooting arrows at the ghastly-looking Kumbhakarna, who is hurling a trident. This demon's enormous power is displayed by his gigantic physique. Around their duel, the war between the two armies continues. On the right side, in three registers, the coronation of the victorious Rama is celebrated: At the bottom Brahmins perform a *yagna*, fire-sacrifice, surrounded by gifts, they have received and by cows and musicians. Three women approach them with offerings, monkeys blow the conch and beat the cattle-drums.

The arrangement of the figures comprises Rama and Sita on the throne, the three brothers at their back holding paraphernalia, Jambavan with a book, and Hanuman massaging his master's feet, behind them (as far as the fragmented condition of the textile permits) are shown the seven rishis and more members of Rama's victorious army.

Stylistically, the two kalamkars are very similar and executed by the same workshop at approximately around the same period, They share the same conventions but there are minute differences in details like Hanuman's features or Jambavans outfit. One would not be surprised if the two were done by father and son but who did which one possibly remains a matter of speculation.

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Kapdagonda
Dongria Kondha Textiles

Pankaja Sethi



Bonda woman doing an embroidery

The identity of Kondha textile is distinct compared to other needlecrafts of Odisha. Dongria Kondha textile represents the social and cultural context of gender as well as their relation with the material culture. In examining the role of gender in the making of handcrafted tradition, this article focuses how the myths and legends associated with the textiles narrate the story of Niyamgiri hills of creation. The ethnographic material presented here, travelling across time and space, encompasses varied expression, of representation and symbolism' of the *kapdagonda* (textiles in the local kui dialect) and Niyamgiri.

These groups of Adivasi live in the Niyamgiri hills of Rayagada district (undivided KBK) of Odisha, practising slash and burn farming for sustenance for several generations. Dongria Kondhas are basically agriculturists and among their community it is the women who primarily contribute towards agriculture.

They consider themselves close to nature and their association with Niyamgiri is similar to the notion of people understanding their environment as their parent.[1] Kondhas look towards the nature as their giver, Niyamgiri thus as the creator, protector. obliging Kondha to follow his rules or *'niyam ku niyam* and



satisfy him with *Meriah Parva*-human sacrifice.[2] According to them, it is the Niyam Raja who created the customs, the God and Goddess, the river and the vegetation. Hence, the Niyamgiri hills where they live are subject to the mercy of Niyam Raja and still belong to Him. They follow what He said and follow the rules made by Him. After the abolition of the act of human sacrifice, Kondha began to

practise the Meriah ritual to please Niyam Raja by sacrificing a male buffalo to the *Jhakeri kudi* (Gram Devi or Village-Goddess), She is the Village-Goddess created by the Niyam Raja who protects the villagers from the evil eyes. This explains how the myths are integrated into the society. This article will now discuss how the strong beliefs of the Kondha are associated with their kapagonda or textiles made by the Kondha women.

Kondha Women and Textiles

Whilst living in the hills of Niyamgiri, Kondha women devote most of their time in cultivation as it is their prime source of substances. As discussed earlier, their relation with nature is such that agriculture is imperative. Thus,making of textiles is secondary after their daily household activities. Moreover, it is only during the leisure hours, either in a dormitory or during relaxed hours in the field that Kondha women practice their traditional craft. It is interesting to note how Kondha women in the midst of agricultural and household activities render the beautiful textile encompassing several years of narratives together bound to the thread.

Bold and beautiful Dongria Kondha women look magnificent with the white kapdagonda covering their body minus the back enhanced with silver and beaded ornaments. Most of them cover their back with the shawl—traditionally embroidered by the Kondha women. However, this textile is now replaced by the locally purchased towels to a large extent. Kondha women's everyday routine begins early in the morning, wearing the traditional Kapdagonda (short length running fabric similar to sari) to the field, carrying the materials along with them. Usually their hair bun is the place where they carefully fix their *suji* (needle) along with the *suta* (thread) plus multiple hairpins and flowers for decoration. In addition to this, they keep *katuri* (small sickle-shaped tool) as an adornment of hair and a necessary tool for cutting threads. Whether it is textile or agriculture, Kondhas still practice the indigenous methods, thus pursuing the tradition of their ancestors.

This tradition of making shawl is practiced in the villages of Khajuri, Hundijali, Kuril, Kadrakuma, and other surrounding villages and is limited to the older generation. Very few among the younger generations are keen on learning the craft because the intricacy of pattern needs both skill and patience. Travelling across time and space, the art of making kapdagonda passed on from one generation to other carrying on the threads of tradition. In the passage of time, Kondhas have retained their tradition as their legacy that they have received from their ancestors. Thus, while living in the dormitory young Kondha girls learn the tradition and the craftsmanship from their seniors till they are betrothed or married. The skilled work of kapdagonda illustrates varied expression of gender in relation to material culture, a sensory process of blending and assorting material together, crafting within their limitation of time and place. The following section will now discuss how

Kondha women have been rendering the symbolic meaning and representation of Niyamgiri onto the fabric.

Enhanced with symbolic motifs and patterns this textile is made for occasional purposes only such as for their beloved and rituals. An act of exchange of textile'[3] from the unmarried *Dhangidi* (Kondha girl) to her *Dhangada* (Kondha man) as a sign of bonding and love means positive gesture and future relationship. This textile, which cannot be easily separated from the person[4] carrying social messages, life stories or biographies,[5] is an exemplary of art and symbolism in the social process of creation.

Embroidery of Kapdagonda involves indigenous methods for which Kondha women collect the base fabric from the Jhigri village near Bissam Cuttack woven by the underprivileged community and the *suta* or threads for embroidery are procured from the local Chatikona haat bazaar. This hand woven, off-white thick and coarse textured fabric is enhanced with bold geometrical patterns and colours. The design and patterns are not traced or drawn; they count the threads in order to construct the symmetrical geometrical motifs that appear similar on the reverse side of the fabric as well. Sometime threads in the horizontal or weft direction are loosened or replaced with multicoloured threads to achieve *keri*—diagonal lines. The field research indicates that these geometrical patterns embroidered on the shawl are the representation of the Niyamgiri hill. As discussed earlier, Kondhas association with Niyamgiri hills is such that it reflects in textile as well as in paintings *(Jhakeri Kudi*—wall painting). Moreover, the triangular motifs called as *Khandua* are created with floating threads that symbolize the abode of Jhakeri Kudi and the circular pattern-*kanka* rendered with buttonhole stitches represents the eyes of Jhakeri Kudi in order to protect them from the evil eyes. Thus, motifs of Kapdagonda portray the story of Niyamgiri hills of creation.

The Dongria Kondha textile illustrates cultural and social context of Kapdagonada, particularly the role of gender in relation to material culture and the narratives. It is not only an example of art but also a 'symbolic representation' of their identity.

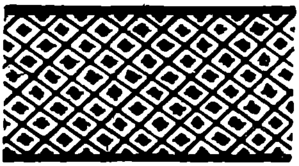
(Earlier published in *Imaging Odisha*, Prafulla, 2013)

Bomakei : Jewel of Traditional Odishan Textile

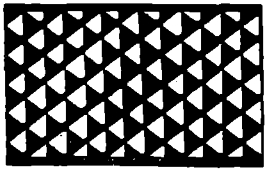
Rebanto Goswami

After toiling for three years I discovered one of the oldest forms of Odisi weaving that had reached the peak of its excellence and became almost extinct these days. It was in the village of Bomakei, forty two kilometers down south from Berhampur the most important trade-place in the district of Ganjam. Leaving Ichhapuram behind, just after you cross the river Bahuda you will see a narrow dusty road has kissed the National Highway No. 5 and indicates the border of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. If you wheel up 13 kilometers on that road towards Jarada you will reach the village of Bomakei under Chikiti Tehsil which was once a very prosperous estate. The Chikiti kings were patrons of theatrical Opera, stilt dance and a typical style of Brocade weaving which we can call the Bomakei style. They were vaishnavas and one of them used to arrange lila performances with court-dancers in those saris. Raja Radhamohan Deo, the grandfather of Sachchidananda Deo (the present prince) was a poet and probably the last great patron of the weavers of this style. As far as we have come to know that after his demise the Bomakei sari gradually lost its high demand and patronage. The forefathers of Chikiti royalty founded some villages like Sauntiapalli (Samanta Palli, the village of feudators), Brahmana Nuagaon (new, village for Brahmins), Patrapur (place of court-members) and Bomakei. This Bomakei was given to the Diwan or the Chief Minister who was a *zamindar* there. In the personal collection of his last scion Chintamoni Dyansamantra (present M. L. A.) lie some of the best examples of the Bomakei sari. A Brahmin by caste, he claims descent from one of the seven brothers mentioned in the popular Odia legend of Taopoi. These seven brothers (Sadhava) were great merchants who earned a huge lot of fortune from their trade with South-east Asia. Bolstered by their great wealth, they became the most influential men along the Odisha coast, courted by local rulers and were given estates and ministerships. They gradually left their ancestral village, Mantridi, the village of ministers, and settled in different parts of Odisha. One came to Bomakei and was given the title of Dyan Samantra combined Diwan, Samanta and Raja, His tenants were from all castes and professions including two weaver families, Patra and Nayak, who were the ancestors of the present forty six weavers. Whether it is a legend or truth, we are left with two alternative theories about the origin of the Bomakei sari. Either the art was prevalent in Chikiti principality and was developed by the Bomakei weavers themselves in Chikiti principality or it was brought to this area by the settlers from Mantridi.

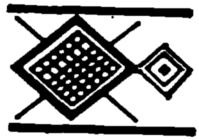
The Bomakei weaver weaves a gay spontaneity of primary colours with patches of blood red, touch of spinach green over a pool of jet black combinations that despite their strength produce delicate designs. The warm and earthy aroma of the soil, and their inherent understanding of colour and design are all intertwined.



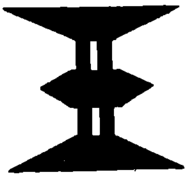
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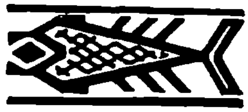
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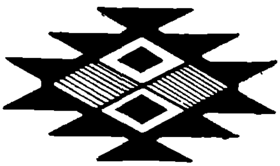
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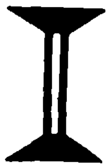
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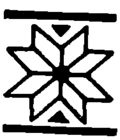
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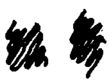
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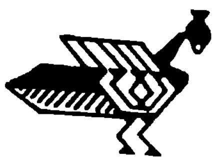
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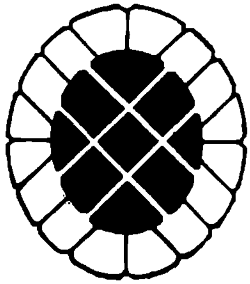
13A

The weavers have inherited their colour sense from their fore-fathers who were inspired by their environment and religious fantasies, To them, red is a symbol of blood of life, revealed through the darkness of infinity which is black and from an expression of the power of Shakti or Thakurani, the archetypal mother, Green represents agriculture which sustains life protected by Sudarshana. the flying wheel of Lord Krishna, that kills. Orange is borrowed from the dry, reddish earth and yellow from mustard flowers. These are the traditional base colours of the fabrics.

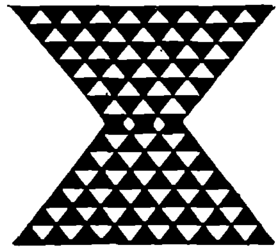
On a bright or a darkest background the weavers create panels of contrasting motifs in the Anchala, the end cloth of the sari. Their motifs are many. Kalara or



13B



14

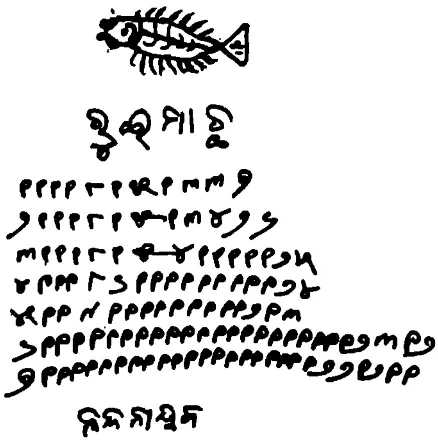


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bitter qourd the Atasi flower, *Kanthi Phula* or a small flower, *Machchi* or fly. *Chadhei* or bird. *Mayura* or peacock, *Rohi Machcha* or carp fish, *Kainchcha* or tortoise, *Padma* or lotus, Rukha or wooden lampstand, the *Dambaru* or small tapered handdrum of Lord Shiva, *Danti* or teeth, horizontal half diamonds and the *Nakshi*, horizontal full diamonds. At the end of *Anchala* panels the body space of the sari accented with a single *Buttah* or motif of a bird on a tree. *Dalimba* or Pomegranate corns and *saara* or seeds topped with a row of *Kumbha* or temple spires are favourite border motifs. Both the *Dalimba* and the *saara* are diamond shaped beads where the former has a dot within and the *saara* is halved vertically. The saris are named after the border design the weaving technique and the body colour. *Muha* is face and *jorha* mean joining. To achieve a solid colour effect in the *Anchala* two different coloured warp threads are twisted with starch and joined at the junction where the *Anchala* and body meet. This is called *Muhajorhi*—a sari can therefore be called *Muhajorhi Ranga Dalimba* if it is blood red bodied having dotted diamonds in the border with joined warp threads in the *Anchala*.

All the design elements are taken from the immediate environment. The sari is woven in two ply, 40sX26s count cotton yarn and is coarse, necessary because of the humidity and atmospheric salinity in the air.

Now, let us see how they weave. For the motifs there are some digital rhymes which are the formula for weaving which vary from family to family. There are only seven expert weavers left in this small community of forty six and their fathers were the original masters of this oldest Odissi brocade who handed down the legacy of the digital rhymes to the heirs. Their style of writing is distinct and individual and each weaver keeps them confidential, almost like secret codes. Anyhow I have managed to photograph two such code-rhymes from the family-book maintained by Babu Patra and Nanda Nayak. (Illustrations 16). The number of the lines indicate the number of steps taken to weave a motif and the digits show the order of the *Barhi* or the extra held shafts which go up and down. Here



16

we can see how a carp fish (by Nanda Nayak) and a thirteen stepped parrot (by Babu Patra) is woven. A characteristic feature of Bomakei weaving is that the stepping and shaft formula to weave regular motifs remains the same in any composition, regardless of the weaver. Another characteristic is that there is no fixed layout for the *Anchala* panels. A weaver cannot reproduce even his own work from memory unless he copies it. They start with their concept of the distribution of colours and the width of the panel of the diamond beads, called in general a *Mukta Panji* pattern of the border. They freely compose the regular motifs on the loom with no symmetrical order although an optical harmony of colour distribution and panel size is rigidly maintained. Unlike other traditional saris the *Anchala* pattern does not have any regular grading of the motifs, like for example, heavy to light or narrow to broad to narrow. This reflects a feudal stance. Only the rich and Brahmins wore those saris and each piece was different allowing the buyer to believe that he or she was possessing an exclusive creation. The traditional three shuttle weaving technique and the extra heald shaft design or primitive pit looms made production time-consuming and labour intensive there by adding to the high cost of the sari. Worn only during rituals and ceremonies the manner of draping the sari differed from Bahmins to non-Brahmins. The women in Bomakei and its surrounding villages continue to wear this sari at the time of marriage, specific saris are worn on many ceremonies, and, certain saris are used for religious purposes. The *Dhala Bada Saara Sari* is used by the Saura and Kandha tribes and used to wrap their deity- images, where the *Kala Bada Saara Sari* is draped behind the Image of the goddess Thakurani. It is unfortunate that this rich tradition of brocade-weaving barely survives in the region and when it is used it depends solely on the rituals of marriage and at the temple.

Till date, some authorities have declared that the oldest handloom fabrics of Odisha is with tie and dye technique. But there are lot of evidences, legends and reasonings showing that Ikat or tie and dye technique of Odisha is a textile art derived from the trade with South East Asia and was developed by the Mehers

(Rajput Weavers) and Bengali (Nuapatna) weavers who had migrated long back to Odisha. This extra warp and weft brocading is older than that and I assume it was prevalent all over Odisha before the *ikat* came. I have a pillow cover made of a sari *Anchala* which was collected from Siminai in Dhenkanal District. That too have a thirteen stepped stylized parrot, flowers and diamond motifs with an eye. The other two saris were collected by Bhabesh Sanyal, the eminent painter in New Delhi, in his youth from a Sambalpuri Haat (market) which have the colours of the Bomakei with a different type of flower, fish (condensed) and heart or Pan motifs. The last find out by the weavers' Service Centre is a Sonepur Raj Sari having extra held shaft flowers and a three shuttled check and the *kumbha*. A torn piece of old Mania-Bandha Sari is lying with Kamalakanta Mishra of Utkalika (Bhubaneswar) showing the same technique and colour scheme followed by Nuapatna weavers. So, not only in the village of Bomakei but all over Odisha these non ikat varieties were woven alongside the *Ikat* saris even thirty to fifty years back. And what makes me feel that this brocade is the oldest form of Odissi weaving, is the range of brocaded tribal saris from Kotpad in Koraput and Mayurbhanj district. It would be interesting to work on the origins of all these saris and to study how the motifs are derived from the environment and daily life objects. The elephant, lion and the creepers which we see in *Ikat* saris like Bichitrapuri of Sonepur and Gaja Bandha of Nuapatna could be later additions in weaving from the design-concepts of temple carvings and Pata Chitra panels but whatever the medium be, the basic forms are very much controlled by the techniques of weaving and dyeing. The master weavers always translated three dimensional forms into flat or two-dimensional drawing keeping strictly in their mind the limitations of their techniques and looms. Sometimes they have contributed to new techniques like tie and dye or developed their own existing one. The way they handle the forms applied requires our keen attention and observation. We, as students of design or as applied artists, should find out and learn the basic principles of creating linear forms from the traditional things lying around us. Wherever we go for sketching or just on pleasure trips, we are morally obliged to keep our eyes wide open not to miss anything on our way. Academic training implies only the grammar of art or the techniques of expression in art-form, but the major learning area is life and the environment we live in.

No creation is complete. So we should not sit satisfied with what we have just created and learnt. Rather we are born to learn more and more and try to surpass our own selves every minute. The golden treasures of Odisha are lying in front of us. And I feel, one's lifetime even is not enough to learn and see all of them, application and modification are quite far away. Let us all creative people, therefore, unite, think and work together and watch how far we can contribute more in visual forms, enriched with the; experience of our own tradition.

(Earlier published in *Chitra*-3, 1986, a Journal of Art and Aesthetics of B.K. College of Art and Crafts, Bhubaneswar, Ed. Dinananth Pathy)

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Introducing Dancing Ganjam

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Palit. Have you watched Mahari dance.

Mahapatra. Yes, I have watched Dunguri Mahari dancing and the Maharis dance on the boat. They accompany Madana Mohana. When the Gotipua group dances, Maharis sing. Truly Mahari dance is not a pattern of dance. As we move our hands white talking, similarly Maharis do while singing. They move their hands more than their feet.

Palit. Is Odissi influenced by Maharis?

Mahapatra. Today's Mahari is somewhat like Odissi. None of the Maharis ever danced with display of so many hand gestures and feet movements. More than Mahari, Gotipua has influenced Odissi. According to Guruji today's Odissi is a mixture of Gotipua and Mahari dance. However, the impact of Mahari is minimal.

You put me on a swing
Named me Hira
Rice is harvested round the year
It is named Kalajira
A few Kalajira rice have tils on their tops
Khandua silk is tied on groom's head
Til particles are stuck on my father's head
In my kitchen garden grows beans
If you want to play dice proceed to Madhuvana grove
Framing the grove are the pathways
At four cardinals, four parasols
At the centre courtesans dance.

Who could be the dancers?

They are *Kurumuria*
They dance flanging side glances
Constant use of eye- twisting has left
permanent scars on their faces
You are blessed with good qualities
Odias love to chew pan but
your lips are not yet reddened
Because you have left the arecanuts
in the sailing boat.

Who sells sweets sitting
at the front of the boat?

The boat belongs to the *Sadhavas*
My son is the Emperor of Kalinga,
will march in a procession
sitting on a caparisoned elephant,
in front of my house.

Pandit Gopabandhu Das who was seated on the balcony of Rasika Raja Matha with Pandit Nilakantha Das enquired from Aparna Panda, "Who are *Kurumuria* courtesans?" Aparna Panda replied "They belong to Srikuruma, they are *devadasis*". Near Mukhalingam, there is a village known as Srikuruma. Devadasi temple dance of Srikuruma is famous in the south. Listening to Aparna Panda, Gopabandhu remarked " Nilakantha, look" How a mother of Paralakhemandi is inspiring her baby to imbibe nationalstic spirits even at this tender age, What more could be the measure of strength of nationalism? ... Harvest *Kalajira* rice throughout the year. Sow betel. Watch the Devadasi dance of Srikuruma courtesans. Engage in maritime trade. Be the Emperor of Kalinga. Ride caparisoned elephant and march with pomp and grandeur. Realise, a mother does not wish her child to be a high official; minister or a member of Legislative Assembly. What an excellent aspirating thought".

(Mother,who was singing Luluby was the nice of Aparna Parichha and the persons who were watching her were the eminent freedom fighters. They were on a mission to rebuilt Odisha as a separate state. Kalikinkara Mishra, *Natyakara Aparna Parichha* O *Vijaya Vasanta Nataka*, 2013).

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37. *Ibid.* pp. 247-253.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
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Sakhinata

Notes:

1. The first sakhinata performance was conceived and performed in the court of Paralakhemandi with the strong support of Raja Rudrapratap Gajapati, Lachhamana Bisoie, and Mrudanga Ray. They are considered the founders.

2. Hanuman Bhagarthi, Surya Suara who lived in the Kavichandra street of Paralakhemandi donned the role of sakhis. Later Tarini Patra, a well-known *vina* player had propagated this performance and introduced teenaged girls instead of boys in the dance group, Dasarathi Bhuyan, 1998, Lopapaijivaki Odishara Lokanrutya', *Prajatantra Saptahiki,* Oriya, Vol. VI, No. 14, pp. 21-7 (June), p. 8. Published from Cuttack, Also refer Dinanath Pathy, 2007, *Rethinking Odissi,* p. 131, Sunil Kothari, 1990. *Odissi: Indian Classical Dance Art,* p. 44. Also see D.N. Patnaik 1971,1990, *Odissi Dance, p.* 77.

   Gotipua dance appears to have originated in the reign of Prataparudra Deva (AD 1497-1540) and gained popularity in the subsequent Muslim period on account of the rigidity of the purdha system which led to the seclusion of women and made their presence scare on festive occasions, Krushna Chandra Panigrahi in *Kala Vikash Kendra Souvenir,* 1960, p. 17. Also see Priyambada Mohanty Hejmadi and Ahalya Hejmadi Patnaik 2007, *Odissi- An Indian Classical Dance Form,* pp. 42-3. and Bhaktivedanta Swami 2003, *Sri Chaitanya Charitamruta, Madhyalila*, Part. 2, chapters 9-16, pp. 135-6.

3. Ramananda Raya was a devout Vaishnava of this extreme cult and encouraged worship according to *Sakhi bhava.* It was he who introduced the custom of the temple dances being performed by boys dressed as girls and not by women as was the custom elsewhere (Sunil Kothari, 'Gotipua Dances of Orissa, *Sangeet Natak,* Vol. 8. p. 32).

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(i) *Bhanja Vamsanucarita* (Odia verse) (1951, 1977 Bhanjanagar), ed. by Maguni Das.

(ii) *Bhanja Vamsa O' Gumusara Bidroha* (Odia verse), by Gangapani Mahapatra, by Maguni Das, Berhampur, 1978.

(iii) *Bhanja Vamsavali* (Odia prose), ed. by Maguni Das (1982, Bhanjanagar: Kavisamrat Book Store).

(iv) *Bhanja Vamsavali*, (Sanskrit verse), ed. 1932/33 by S.N. Rajaguru. See 'The Chronological Account of the Bhanjas of Gumsur', in Prachi, 2, 3 and 4, 2-17. Repr. in *Bhanja Smaranika,* 22 (1991),10-17, Rourkela: Adarsha Pathagara.

(v) *Gumusara Vamsavali* (Odia prose), an extract is given by M.M. Chakravarti, see Chakravarti, M.M. 1998.

(vi) *Gumusara Bhanja Vamsavali* (Odia verse), by Suryamani Chyau Pattanayak. Ed. by Durgamadhab Nanda (1973, Berhampur).

(vii) Historical Narrative of the Rajahs of Goomsor. English translation of a text in Odia by Rama Chandra Gura. (Translated from Odia first into Telugu and then into English.) See Revd W. Taylor, Some Additional Notes on the Hill Inhabitants of Goomsoor Mountains, with the translation of a Telugu paper, containing an Historical Narrative of Bhonju Family, Feudal Chieftains of Gumsara, in *Madras Journal of Literature and Science.* No.18, January, 1838.

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Footnotes

1. In Odisha the cultivator caste is known as *chasa*.
2. Beames 1870.
3. For more information on the views and arguments of Kantichandra Bhattacharya and R.L. Mitra. see Dash, G.N. 1993 and 2014b, pp.102-28.
4. Beames 1870.
5. Beames 1872, 88 (*emphasis added*).
6. *Ibid*., 105. (*emphasis added*)
7. *Ibid*, 105.
8. *Ibid*, 119.
9. Hunter, Stirling, Beames, Sahu 1956, 220.
10. Maltby 1874: Preface VI. The preface was written in October 1873. (*emphasis added*)
11. Bandyopadhyay 1864. He placed Dinakrushna Das, the author of *Rasa Kallola* in first position.
12. It is also said that, a little later, in 1879, another Bengali intellectual, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, also praised the poetic talents Upendra Bhanja Upendra Bhanja. See Ray, Durgacharan 1998, 103–4, 112–4.
13. The present author has traced at least seven such *vamsavali* texts. See 'Ghumsar *Bhanja Vamsavali* Texts' in the References.
14. Mahapatra, K. N. 1969, 215–6. Ghana Bhanja has authored two *kavya*s called '*Trailokyamohini*' and '*Rasanidhi*'.
15. Trivikrama Bhanja has written a *kavya* named '*Kanakalata*'.
16. In Odisha, in the context of Odia literature, such imaginary stories are classified as 'secular themes', in contrast to *Puranic* stories, which are classified as 'religious themes'.
17. The influence of the singing of *Gitagovinda* by Jayadeva , especially in the Jagannatha temple, Puri, was extremely popular in Odisha. See Dash, G. N. 1976 and 2004 for more information.
18. See Mohanty, Surendra 1992, 403–7; Mishra, Binayak 1962, 146–7.
19. Chakravarti 1898, 367.
20. When retained at the end of the word/lines, 'k', of course, is implicitly and almost without exception followed by 'a' vowel, unless another vowel explicitly follows it as Odia syllables are invariably open and end with a vowel.
21. *Koti Brahmanda Sundari*, 14/38.
22. Chakravarti 1898, 367.
23. Mansinha, M. 1962, 118.
24. A large number of late medieval Odia poets and authors of religious and other treatises in Sanskrit were from southern Odisha.

25. The poem was first published in a literary periodical, *Mukura* (I/5), and later, after Gopabandhu's death, was included in an anthology of his poems, *Abakashachinta*. See *Pandit Gopabandhu Granthabali* 2004, 170–1 for the poem, and 13-14, 25, for further information.

26. See Beames 1872, 119.

27. These songs do not necessarily consist of four *padas* or couplets, as the name indicates. See Mohanty, J. B., 1976, 51ff., and 1982, 3–18 for more information.

28. For such a song written in Odia see *Parasurama Vijaya*, a Sanskrit play, the authorship of which is attributed to Gajapati Kapilendra Dev. See *The Prachi*, Vol. 2, Parts III & IV, 115.

29. Such songs are to be found in *Sangita Muktavali* by Srichandan and *Sangita Narayana* by Gajapati Jagannath Narayan Dev of Parlakhimedi. See Mohanty J. B., 1982, 9–10.

30. Dhananjaya's available work is *Chaupadi Bhusana*, in which 34 such songs have been compiled, though he may have written many other songs too.

31. For more information, see Mohanty J.B. 1976, 1982.

32. See Patnaik, D.N. 1990, 73-9.

33. The *Gotipua* dance was exclusive male in contrast to the *mahari* dance, which was exclusive female. There were other distinctions. *Gotipua* dancers used to sing mostly the *Chaupadis* or Odissi songs; whereas the *Maharis* mainly the songs of *Gitagovinda*.

34. *Dasarupakam*.1/9. See Vatsyayan, K. 1987 for a theoretical discussion of the concepts of *margi* and *desi*.

35. According to *Dasarupakam* by Dhananjaya, *nritta* is based on *tala* and *laya* and is different from *nrittya*, which consists of *abhinaya* or acting. See *Dasarupakam*, I/9.

36. In *Prayaschitta*, a novel by Fakir Mohan Senapati published in 1915, the term *chaupadi* is qualified significantly by the term '*dakshini*' i.e. 'the southern'.

37. This is the style of *Gotipua* dance that I saw in my childhood days, more than fifty years ago.

38. Kalicharan Pattanaik seems to have only slightly hinted, but not explicitly claimed, that the term *Odisi* occurs in an old proverb, "*utha, baitha, thia, chali; buda, bhasa, bhaunri, pali; Odisi natara atha beli*', which he came to know from one Somanath Mahapatra of the village Ardia (Pattanaik 197, 204). However, this proverb, which has not been noticed by any other folklorist, seems to be modern. Somanath Mahapatra might even have created it himself. Of course, the *Oudra* or *Oudra-Magadhi* dance forms are mentioned in the treatise on music.

39. In contrast to *Gotipua* dance, the *mahari* dance might have originated from a classical, that is, *Margi* dance.

40. Patnaik, D.N. 1990, 77. Dinanath Pathy, although he does not say so explicitly, gives a broad hint that the *gotipua* dance form might have evolved from *Sakhi Nacha* when he says, 'The *sakhinata* slowly moved from the religious enclosures and was performed for the king and the palace. Could the source of *rajanrutya* be traced in the *sakhinata* of south Odisha?' Pathy 2003, 41.

41. There is a tradition that Ray Ramananda, an Odia associate of Sri Chaitanya, was the creator of this dance form, which thus would have originated from Puri. But this tradition

is highly doubtful, as from the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* we know that Ray Ramananda was staging dramas with the *mahari*s or *devadasi*s, i.e. female actors, playing different roles. See *Chaitanya Charitamrita*, *Antya*, 5,10–24, 36–9. As he was associated with drama and *mahari* dance most probably his name was used to legitimise the Puri school of *gotipua* dance. Kelucharan Mohapatra, the famous Guru of Odissi, is a product of Puri centre. See Citaristi 2001.

42. Eberhard Fischer, unpublished paper entitled 'Painting in Southern Odisha in 19th and early 20th centuries: Regional Styles, Workshop Styles or Individual Styles?' delivered as keynote address in the Annual Conference of the Odisha Research Project at Salzau, Germany, May 2003; see particularly the famous palm leaf illustration of Upendra Bhanja's *Rasika Haravali*, jointly published by him and Dinanath Pathy (1990).

43. See Williams, J. and J.P. Das 1988.

44. Mansinha 1962, 116.

45. After this debate was taken up in other periodicals, it gradually became very personal, involving the respective supporters of Upendra Bhanja and Radhanath Ray. Once the personal insinuations and accusations had reached a new low, it was considered inadvisable to publish such writings in prestigious periodicals. Therefore two special periodicals, *Indradhanu* (The Rainbow) and *Bijuli* (The Lightning), came into being. *Indradhanu* supported Upendra Bhanja and was anti-Radhanath, whereas *Bijuli* supported Radhanath and was anti-Upendra Bhanja. For more information, see Samantaray 1981, 54–66, 78–83; 1960, 118–20; *Indradhanu*, Introduction, 1–49 and Mishra, P.C. 1996, 2002.

46. For this letter, published on 14th March 1894, see Samantaray 1981, 54–66. It may further be noted that, at the start of his literary career, Radhanath paid homage to Upendra Bhanja in a poem titled *Kabibar Upendra Bhanja*, which was written in Bengali and published in 1868 in *Kabitavali* an anthology of his Bengali poems. For this poem, see Ray, Durgacharan 1998, 67.

47. Besides books, popular articles and research papers on Upendra Bhanja and the genre of his literature, a number of Ph.D and D.Litt. dissertations have been submitted to different universities in Odisha. In the Odia-medium M.A. curriculum, Upendra Bhanja and the related literature he represents always occupy a vital place.

48. See Section IV for further discussion of the subject.

49. These plays are (i) *Rajakabi Upendra* (1928) by Mayadhar Mansinha, (ii) *Kabisamrat Upendra Bhanja* (1947) by Manoranjan Das, (iii) *Bhanjakabi* (1948/1950) by Debendra Kumar Singh, (iv) *Kabisamrat* (1953) by Rajat Kumar Kar, (v) *Sisira Sikta Kabi* (1972) by Raghunath Mishra, (vi) *Kalinga Kabi* (1977) by Pitambar Pradhan and (vii) *Upendra Bhanja* (1984) by Saileswar Nanda. A film has also been made about Upendra Bhanja.

50. Some people attribute the authorship of this verse to Upendra Bhanja, which is extremely doubtful.

51. Dinakrushna Das might have been a senior contemporary of Upendra Bhanja. He is the author of *Rasakallola*, a *kavya* dealing with Krishna's life and famous for its lyrical beauty.

52. Translated from Odia by the author.

53. Kalinga Bharati, established by Bichhanda Charan Pattanayak, is perhaps the oldest and most prominent among them.

54. Mohanty, Rajalakshmi, 2002, 46–9.

55. *Bhanja Vamsanucharita* ed. Maguni Das, 1977, 30-32. These *vamsavali* texts have not yet been fully utilized by scholars in writing the history of the Khurda Rajas.

56. See Mahapatra, K.N. 1958, 131–4 1969, 268–70. According to K.N. Mahapatra, the date of the inscription is 6th October 1739.

57. *Madala Panji* 1940, 78.

58. Padel 2000, 329 (note 5 of Ch. 2).

59. Cobden-Ramsay, 1910, 24. But in another page (136) of the same book it is mentioned that the Khondmals were taken over by the British in 1835. For more information, see Padel 2000.

60. Ramsay 1910, 24. For further information, see Padel 2000, Patnaik, Sudhakar 1956 (Introduction) and De 1957, 90–4, 159–95.

61. G. Toynbee writes, 'in March 1817 a body of Gumsur Khunds, 400 strong, crossed over into the Khurda territory and openly unfurled the banner of revolt.' Toynbee 1960, 15. See also Ray, B. C. 1960, 268.

62. This is known from a letter to the editor by one Janarddan Das, published in the 22nd Oct. 1870 issue of the *Utkal Dipika*. See Patnaik, Sudhakar 1972, 172–6.

63. The demand for the unification of the Odia-speaking tracts under one administration was made for first time in the pages of *Utkala Dipika* by Gourishankar Ray in March 1869. See Patnaik Sudhakar 1972, 531–6.

64. During the Odia language agitation, in the seventh decade of the nineteenth century, Beames supported the Odia language, forcefully claiming that it was an independent language. Besides, he asserted, "At a period when Odia was already a fixed and settled language Bengali did not exist; the inhabitants of Bengal spoke a vast variety of corrupt forms of eastern Hindi' (Beames, 1872, 119). The claim made by Beames was a great source of inspiration in the construction of an Odia language identity. Furthermore, it may be recalled here that Beames accorded Upendra Bhanja the position of 'the first national poet' (see above, fn. 6). For more information on Beames' role here, see Dash, G.N. 1983, 49–53, 67—73; 1993, 17, 23–4, 170–204. The important role played by Bengali intellectuals like Rangalal Bandyopadhyay and Bhudev Mukhopadhyay in the Odia language agitation and the construction of an Odia identity should not be underestimated. For Rangalal's role, see Dash G.N. 1978, 368–9, fn. 45; 1979, 74–7, 83–104.

65. The Odia language agitation in the seventh decade of the 19th century, championed by Gourishankar Ray, was the very first important step in the construction of Odia identity. See Dash, G.N. 1991, 1993.

66. Moreover, he was an active and ardent supporter of him in the famous *Indradhanu* vs. *Bijuli* debate, mentioned earlier.

67. All this information has been extracted from Mahapatra S., Shridhar 1986.

68. See Anderson, B. 1991, 67

69. See above, fn. 25.

70. According to Pt. Nilakantha Das, the mutual loyalty of husband and wife (*svakiya priti*), which he considered a characteristic feature of Odia culture, was emphasized in the literary works of Upendra Bhanj, in contrast to the permissiveness and licentiousness (*parakiya priti*) of Krishna as reflected in the works of the Vaisnava poets of Bengal and their Odia followers. See Das, Pt. Nilakanth 1953, 484–8.

71. See Mishra, Pt. Godabarish 1946, 48.

The Ramayana: Two Kalamkar Textiles

Note:

1. Mahapatra, R.P., 'Tapestry Containing Ramalila Paintings', *Orissa Historical Research Journal,* Vol. XIII, No. 3, p. 46.

Kapdagonda: Dongria Kondha Textiles

Notes:

1. Ingold, 1996.
2. Padel, 1995. Elwin, 1943.
3. Bayly, 1986.
4. Ibid.
5. Hermann, 1997.

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Elwin, Verrier, 1943b. *Maria-Mmurder and Suicide,* Bombay:
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Hands in the US Garage Scale?', *American Ethnologist,* Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 60-70.
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Thakurani Jatra, Procession of the Mother Goddess in the company of Yoginis. GANJAM Odissi 2015

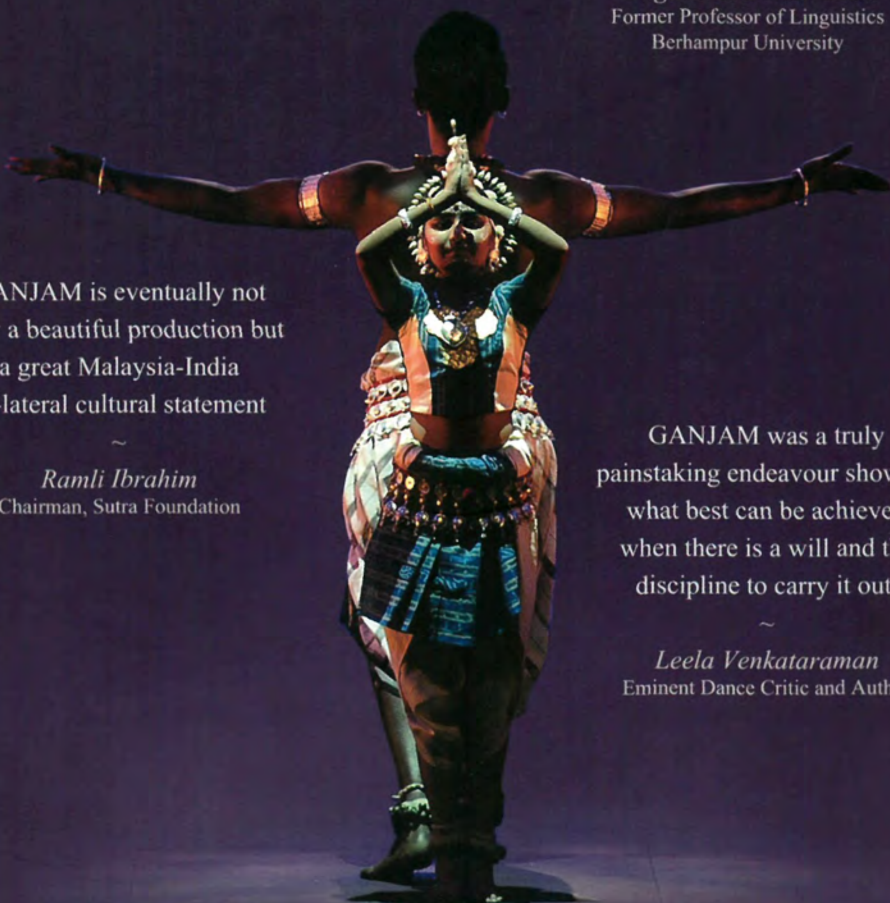
The father and son duo Dinanath and Soubhagya live in Ekamra Bhubaneswar. They work on art and dance history, write poems, essays, paint and edit books and journals. While D. is a veteran and renaissance man, S. has just reached forty-four and teaches art history at the Utkal University of Culture in Bhubaneswar. Both belong to the world famous Swiss Scholar Dr. Eberhard Fischer's school of art historical research and aim at Swiss precision and excellence. While D. has co-authored and published nine books internationally with Dr. Fischer, S. has edited and published twenty volumes of *Angarag*, an international journal dedicated to dance, theatre, music, painting, sculpture, and the arts. For decades, D. has been traveling to his annual destination, Switzerland, his second home, S. prefers to devote his time to home and family - wife Mamata and daughter Soumyasri. Their interest in Odissi dance led them to form a close friendship with the eminent dancer, choreographer and artistic director, Ramli Ibrahim. The Odhani controversy relating to Sutra Dancers and Ramli Ibrahim inspired D. to write a critical assessment of contemporary Odissi as a reconstructed classical dance form titled *Rethinking Odissi* (2007) which remains one of the most authoritative works on Odissi to date. D's involvement with GANJAM Odissi, brings home the idea of authoring a book on the epistemology and semiotics of choreography in collaboration with S. titled Dancing GANJAM.

Portrait photos: D -A. Prathap. S -Ramahari Jena

In recent years, with the towns of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar in coastal Odisha emerging as cultural capitals, histories framed by some of our colonial masters and vigorous campaigns by Odia nationalists, mostly from this region have clouded our perception to such an extent that we have started taking Cuttack and Bhubaneswar to be the literary and cultural nerve centres and forgetting the historic role played by Ghumsar in south Odisha. A rediscovery of the south is therefore overdue.

~

Gaganendra Nath Dash
Former Professor of Linguistics
Berhampur University



GANJAM is eventually not only a beautiful production but a great Malaysia-India bi-lateral cultural statement

~

Ramli Ibrahim
Chairman, Sutra Foundation

GANJAM was a truly painstaking endeavour showing what best can be achieved when there is a will and the discipline to carry it out.

~

Leela Venkataraman
Eminent Dance Critic and Author

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